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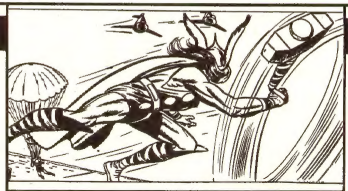

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FEATURE NEWS

MARVEL TEAM-UP ENDS THE WEB OF SPIDER-MAN BEGINS

Marvel Team-Up will reach a finale in its double-sized 150th issue starring Spider-Man and the X-Men. It will then be replaced in December by the new *Web Of Spider-Man.*

The decision to cancel Team-Up arose from the feeling that the need for co-stars every issue had become a limiting factor, according to Editor Danny Fingeroth.

"Each month the story had to be built around one or more guest stars," he commented. "Now we will be free to feature guest stars in all of the Spider-Man titles, where they will appear wherever and whenever they add to the story and character development."

Louise Simonson, Greg LaRocque and Mike Esposito are scheduled as the creative team for *The Web Of Spider-Man.*

That title will be incorporated into the overall Spider-Man continuity. "Readers will be able to enjoy *The Web Of Spider-Man* independently, as with the other titles," Danny Fingeroth said, "But the enjoyment will be greater for those who follow all of the books together."

CHANGES ON TITANS ANNOUNCED GEORGE PEREZ SIGNS THREE-YEAR EXCLUSIVE WITH DC COMICS

In June, George Perez signed a three-year exclusive contract with DC Comics, according to Vice President Executive Editor Dick Giordano. "I'm extremely pleased to make this announcement," said Dick Giordano soon after the signing. "George will bring his remarkable talent to bear on many DC projects in the coming years."

Perez will continue to co-edit *The New Teen Titans* and *Tales Of The New Teen Titans* as well as pencil the covers. He is currently at work penciling *Tales Of The New Teen Titans #50* and he has begun work on *Crisis On Infinite Earths* as well as a graphic novel.

To give Perez a breather after a run of approximately 50 issues of the Titans (and to give him time to work on his other projects for DC), Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez will take over the penciling of *Tales Of The New Teen Titans* beginning with issue #7. Romeo Tanghal will ink. George will pencil *Tales Of The New Teen Titans #57* but the intervening issues will be inked by Mike de Carlo and pencilled as follows: #51 and #52 by Rich Buckler; #53, #54 and #55 by Curt Swan and #56 by Dick Giordano.

Continued on page 27

FEATURE NEWS SPECIAL

SATURDAY MORNING NETWORK SCHEDULES

By Robert Strauss

The three major television networks have finalized their Saturday morning schedules for the 1984-85 season with a noticeable nod toward the tried and true, merchandising potential and cross-media tie-ins. If you like videogames, The Muppets and MTV, you have a lot to look forward to. The new season begins on September 15.

NBC, last year's undisputed Saturday morning ratings winner, is keeping its four biggest guns, *Smurfs, Alvin and the Chipmunks, Mr. T* and *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*, resurrecting *The Pink Panther* (as a father figure, no less) and debuting one new cartoon series, one half-live half-animated music-vid program, and a show that stars a live orangutan.

Over at CBS, familiarity appears to be the attempt. Along with the returning Saturday morning family of Bugs, Snoopy, Kangaroo (of both the Captain and Supercade variety) and that Dragon from the Dungeon, there will be such quickly recognizeable characters as The Muppets, Richard Pryor and Sid and Marty Krofft.

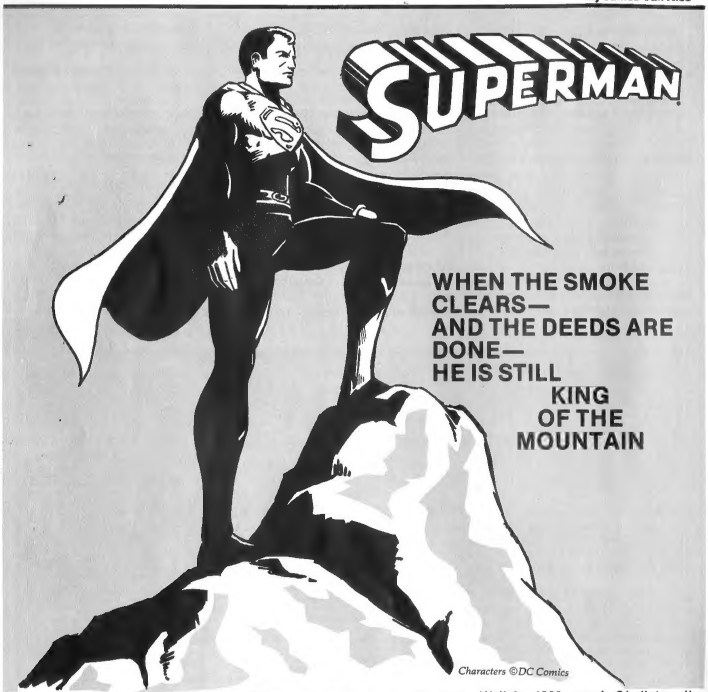
And for those of you who just can't get enough, CBS News' award-winning *In The News* segments will be returning at 7:26, 9:56, 10:26 and 11:56 a.m. and at 12:26 p.m. every Saturday.

ABC, to no one's surprise, is banking on rock video, arcade game adaptations and old and new superheroes to anchor their Fall season.

TIME	ABC	CBS	NBC
6:30-7 a.m.		*Captain Kangaroo*—I don't think I have to tell anybody anything about this guy, except perhaps to point out that this season marks his thirtieth year on television.	
7-7:30 a.m.		*The Get Along Gang*—An animated comedy-adventure featuring six typical American kids who just happen to be animals. Montgomery Moose, Zipper Cat, Dotty Dog, Bingo Beaver, Woolma Lamb and Portia Porcupine are the heroes; Catchum Crocodile and Leland Lizard are the troublemakers. A DIC Production.	
7:30-8 a.m.		*The Muppet Babies*—More cute young critters. This series is being co-produced by Henson Associates and Marvel Productions, and will revolve around the fantasies conjured up by the infant Kermit, Piggy, et al, while reading books in their nursery. Comic book artist Scott Shaw is one of the series' designers.	
8-8:30 a.m.	*The Puppy's Great Adventures*—Encore telecasts of Puppy and his friends continuing their globe-spanning search for his missing master, Young Tommy. Ruby-Spears production.	*Pole Position*—An animated action/adventure show based on the popular arcade game. A family of race car drivers use their high-tech vehicles to combat crime, evil and injustice. Produced by DIC.	*Snorks*—An animated half-hour series focusing on the underwater fantasy world of the new cartoon characters, The Snorks. Sounds like what happens when you get Smurfs wet. Hopefully, they didn't feed them after midnight, too. Hanna-Barbera produced. *Continued on page 30*

HEROES

By James Van Hise



Characters ©DC Comics

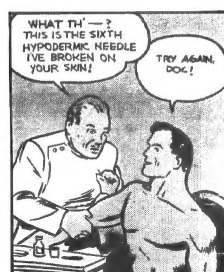
While Superman didn't cause comic books to come into being, he did change the face of them forever.

Just as with many early comic strip heroes, the inspiration for Superman came from the pulp magazines of the early Thirties. Young Jerry Siegel was an avid reader of science fiction. With a touch of Doc Savage and an especially large dose of Philip Wylie's 1930 novel *Gladiator,* it didn't take much for the seventeen year old Jerry Siegel to dream up his own version of a fantastic hero.

Hugo Danner, the hero of Wylie's novel, possessed most of the at-

©1984 DC

tributes of the early Superman, including an ability to leap which was much like flying. Possessing super-hard skin, Danner can be hurt by an exploding artillery shell, but ordinary bullets just bounce off.



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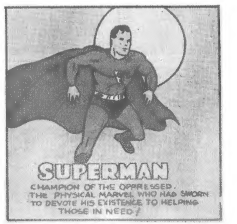
Conceived in 1933, Jerry quickly shared his idea with his friend Joe Shuster and together they began developing the concept. At first their Superman wore civilian clothes, but gradually they designed the basic costume with which he would become identified and which would be only slightly modified throughout his comic book life.

Superman would become a hit with readers. But he was not a hit with the editors whom Siegel and Shuster pitched the strip to for five years. All of the newspaper strip syndicates rejected it as unsuitable and not at all what they were looking for. It was a quirk of fate that brought it into comic books.

The strip idea was sitting on the desk of M.C. Gaines (the father of William Gaines of E.C. and Mad comics fame) at the McClure Syndicate. It was about to be rejected yet another time when Gaines received a call from Harry Donenfeld who had recently taken over the interests of Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and was trying to assemble material for a new book. Comic books up to this time had largely consisted of vastly shrunken-down reprints of newspaper strips. This one would be all new material. While such a thing had been tried before, they had always pretty much just been imitations of existing newspaper strips. In fact, Siegel and Shuster had worked for Donenfeld previously, drawing "Federal Men", "Slam Bradley", "Spy", "Henri Duval", "Dr. Occult" and "Radio Squad". They were grateful that the story would see print, even if it wouldn't be on as grand a scale as a nationally syndicated newspaper strip.

Action #1 was a success but it wasn't until the fourth issue that the publishers realized that it was Superman that was making it one. Investigations had indicated that this might be so. When they featured the red, yellow and blue garbed avenger on the cover of the fourth issue, it sold out. He was the first costumed super-hero and his success inspired countless others.

Thus the legend was born. Working from their small office in



©1984 DC

Cleveland, Siegel and Shuster hired other artists to ghost both the comic book and the syndicated newspaper strip. What there had been no interest in for six years had suddenly become one of the hottest properties around. The artists hired to assist Shuster, who was even then developing eye problems, were Paul Cassidy, Loe Nowack and John Sikela (who would later draw all of the stories in the first issue of *Superboy* in 1949). But the artist who had the most impact on the strip also came into it at this time. His name is Wayne Boring.

While fans associate Wayne Boring with the Superman stories of the Fifties, Boring was also very much in evidence in the Forties. In fact it was his slick and highly polished style which brought a sleek and graceful look to the strip replacing the old, Thirties style of drawing employed by Joe Shuster. Much of the art done in the early Forties which was attributed to Joe Shuster was actually ghosted by Wayne Boring. The look of Superman which continued through the late Sixties, Seventies and into today was established by Wayne Boring over forty years ago. D.C. has been so conscious of this

Continued on page 61

DAFFY DUCK

BY JAMES VAN HISE

At the peak of Donald Duck's popularity one other duck gave him competition—was even crazier and more energetic.

In *Comics Feature #28*, we examined the career of Disney's disagreeable duck, Donald. But there was another fowl personality coming into being about the same time that Donald was being hatched in the *reel* world. While Donald Duck may have been cantankerous and short-tempered, at least he was sane. Daffy Duck, on the other hand, fell somewhere between insanity and anarchy.

Characters are only as good as the talent who develops them and this is evident in the careers of all animated cartoon characters. Daffy Duck, from his first appearance in 1937 through his recent revivals on Chuck Jones' television specials, has passed through many hands and many interpretations, not all of them to the good.

Among lovers of good animation, Warner Brothers studio has a special place in their hearts. The shorts they produced contained the work of some of the finest talent in animation—Chuck Jones, Bob McKimson, Bob Clampett, Tex Avery and Michael Maltese just to name a few. And the fact that the talent at Warner Brothers was more willing to experiment to meet the challenge of the more well-known Disney characters, produced some of the finest creative surges in the history of the animated cartoon. The career of Daffy Duck reflects this aspect of the studio well.

IN THE BEGINNING

Daffy Duck was introduced as a supporting character in the Porky Pig cartoon, "Porky's Duck Hunt", a black and white short from 1937. The manic trademark of Daffy in which he bounces and hoots across the landscape was originated in this cartoon by animator Bob Clampett, although the cartoon was directed by the immortal Tex Avery. When Daffy says, "I'm just a darn-fool duck!" and goes into his crazy routine, a bright new light was born on the animation scene.

But Daffy was not conceived as a star. When it was realized how popular this looney character was, he was given a name and the starring role in his second appearance, "Daffy Duck and Egghead". Egghead was the hunter in a plot much along the lines of the Bugs Bunny cartoons in which Bugs would spend the story both eluding and confounding his pursuer. In fact, Egghead would later evolve into the more sympathetic and humorous character Elmer Fudd. The voice of Fudd would be that of Arthur Q. Bryan until his death in 1959, whereupon Mel Blanc was called upon to imitate his unusual voice, one which he did master, although with some difficulty.

The voice of Daffy Duck, although by Mel Blanc was inspired by a real person—Leon Schlesinger, their producer. "The first producer we had," recalled Chuck Jones, "Leon Schlesinger, was just lazy, and that was good for us. We could get fired for not doing the right pictures, but he never bothered us when we were working. Schlesinger had a lisp and his voice is where Daffy Duck's came from, and also Sylvester's voice since Daffy's is just a speeded up Sylvester. 'Hey, fellath,' he'd say, 'Watcha up to?' and we'd say we were doing a Porky Pig, and he'd say, 'That Thoudth great.' How great can that sound? And off he'd go to the races. And the only time he ever saw the films was when they were in test-reel form (which are now called line tests) or the finished product."[1]

UNDER BOB CLAMPETT

But even though Tex Avery directed the first shorts introducing Daffy Duck, he was more enamored by the character of Egghead and chose to do several shorts featuring that odd character. Bob Clampett made Daffy a star.

Realizing that Porky Pig did not have enough character to be interesting

Bob Clampett *Leon Schlesinger* *Chuck Jones* *Tex Avery* *Robert McKimson*

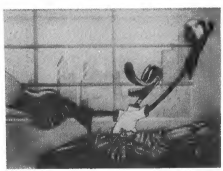
other than as a foil, he originated the teaming of Porky with Daffy in 1938 with Porky as the straight man reacting to Daffy's screwy antics. One of the best of these was "Baby Bottleneck" in which the pair work in the factory which distributes babies for the Stork to deliver. When an egg comes through unhatched, Porky casually orders Daffy to sit on it. Momentarily Daffy begins to comply until he realizes what's being asked of him and he refuses this affront to his masculinity. Porky tries to force Daffy to sit on the egg but in movements denying anatomical possibility, Daffy's rear end avoids contact. A confrontation develops to wild extremes until Daffy and Porky are joined together by a diaper, head to butt. They wind up delivered by stork to a gorilla who sees two eyes peering at her out of the diaper. It is one of the most oddball climaxes of any of the Daffy series. It's pure Clampett through and through.

What characterized Clampett's style was a breakneck pace and gags which pushed the boundaries seemingly to their limit. In "Buckaroo Bugs," a running gag has Bugs using a magnet to disrobe his antagonist, the Red Hot Rider. Each time he goes further until as the cartoon begins to end and the scene irises shut, Bugs reaches through the diminishing hole and plucks off a fig leaf. That was all that the Red Hot Rider had been left wearing in the final scene.

Clampett expresses great admiration for Tex Avery and says that much of his inspiration came from working with that director. But Clampett had a better sense of story than Avery and did not just do something wild for its own sake. He made it an integral part of the story so that each gag seemed to grow out of the one before. He also knew better than to run an unfunny routine into the ground.

Just as the animation in Chuck Jones' cartoons is very recognizeable as his own trademark, a Clampett cartoon is recognizeable as well. The main characters look like they just pulled a Houdini stunt and slipped out of the jacket that ties in the back. The characters look as though they're not only on the manic side, but clear around the bend. His Daffy Duck is recognizeable as Daffy, but he never looked loonier.

He did other Daffy shorts such as, "The Daffy Doc", "Porky and Daffy"



Distinctively Bob Clampett-directed Daffy Duck in "The Daffy Doc". © Warner Bros.

and "Daffy Duck in Hollywood" (all 1938) as well as many other classics including "Scalp Trouble", "Wise Quacks", "A Coy Decoy" and "The Wise Quacking Duck".

Bob Clampett goes for the risque in "The Wise Quacking Duck", showing that the audience for these cartoons forty years ago was not as narrow as today. "Daffy unbuttoned his feathers in the back, let them down, revealing his bare shoulders, then dropped them completely and did a fan dance with the parsley. The audience just roared, but, of course, this was in the period of the war," Clampett explained, "and during the war there was a permissiveness in the theatre very much like what we are getting now. The boys were all in uniform and they wanted this kind of gag."[2]

One of Clampett's best was "The Great Piggy Bank Robbery" in which Daffy imagines himself as Dick Tracy, or in this case Duck Twacy, with his

© Warner Brothers, Inc.

bizarre antagonists Pumpkinhead, Jukebox Jaw and Neon Noodle.

OTHER DIRECTORS

But Clampett was not the only director handling Daffy during this period. While Clampett directed "Draftee Daffy" in 1944, Chuck Jones did "Tom Turk and Daffy", Friz Freleng did "Duck Soup To Nuts" and "Slightly Daffy" while Frank Tashlin did "Plane Daffy".

Friz Freleng's "Henpecked Duck" (1941), featured Daffy called upon to babysit an egg (a task he would later violently refuse in "Baby Bottleneck"). In his own inimitable fashion, he fools around and magically makes the egg disappear—only he can't get it back again! He produces the missing egg again (or at least a reasonable facsimile) in divorce court amid a lot of huffing and puffing. This is a more sane version of Daffy than Clampett's.

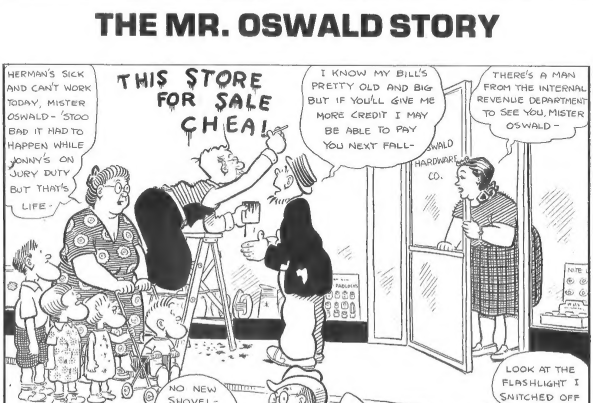
Bob McKimson's "Daffy Doodles" (1946) is one of *the* classic Daffy Duck cartoons. It is the famous one in which Daffy is mysteriously terrorizing a city by drawing moustaches on posters and billboards everywhere. After being hauled into court he promises never to paint on another moustache and then announces, "I'm doin' beards, now!" and exits hoo-hooing all the way. (The "hoo-hoos" which are Daffy's trademark were inspired by a then well-known comedian named Hugh Herbert).

Continued on page 56

STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

THE MR. OSWALD STORY


HERMAN'S SICK AND CAN'T WORK TODAY, MISTER OSWALD- 'STOO BAD IT HAD TO HAPPEN WHILE JONNY'S ON JURY DUTY BUT THAT'S LIFE-
THIS STORE FOR SALE CHEAP
I KNOW MY BILL'S PRETTY OLD AND BIG BUT IF YOU'LL GIVE ME MORE CREDIT I MAY BE ABLE TO PAY YOU NEXT FALL-
HARDWARE CO.
THERE'S A MAN FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE DEPARTMENT TO SEE YOU, MISTER OSWALD-
NO NEW SHOVEL- MAKE HIM GIVE YOU YOUR MONEY BACK!
LOOK AT THE FLASHLIGHT I SNITCHED OFF THE TABLE-

For well over fifty years now, one of America's funniest, best-drawn, most original comic strips has been appearing to an unusually appreciative audience—a comic strip you may never have heard of....

Several years ago a book came into my hands—the title: *40 Years With Mr. Oswald*. It was published in 1968 and is a handsome hardcover collection of full-page comic strips—Sunday-page style—running nearly 300 pages. It is still available, by mail, from the cartoonist responsible, 90-year-old Russ Johnson, at the incredibly low price of $6.00 postpaid. (Only around a hundred copies remain, and the address is Russ Johnson, 421 East 9th Street, Gibson City, Illinois 60936; ask him to autograph your copy and he will.)

"Mr. Oswald" has been running as a monthly feature in *Hardware Retailer* magazine since 1925. The comic strip has also appeared in an English hardware-retailing magazine *Ironmonger* (monthly, since 1955) and has been translated into Finnish, for *Nupi* (monthly, since 1957), the Finnish Hardware Association magazine. (The format of the "Oswald" strip changed in 1982,

SAY, MR. OSWALD– WE'RE HAVIN' AN' AWFUL TIME KEEPIN' YOUR MAIL STRAIGHT SINCE THAT OTHER MR. OSWALD MOVED HERE FROM THE COUNTY SEAT!
SO THAT'S IT! SAY- YOU KNOW THAT GUY'S ABOUT TO RUIN ME?
PAPERS AND PARCELS

with the panels spread out over three pages so that advertisers could have space adjacent to the feature, and at this time the foreign reprintings came to a halt.) Favorable response to Johnson's strip brought him advertising accounts (Armstrong Cork and Remington Arms among them), but, as Johnson says in *40 Years With Mr. Oswald*, "I'm a hardware man who has always liked to draw pictures."

I beg to differ. Johnson is a gifted cartoonist—who happened to run a hardware store in a small town, while he created an impressive (if largely unknown, outside the circle of *Hardware Retailer* readers) body of work. His "Mr. Oswald"—patterned physically after his father, who died in 1930, leaving his son the responsibility of their store—is clearly Johnson himself: a well-meaning but often frustrated merchant in small-town Dippy Center, muddling through life as best he can. Though Mr. Oswald is the strip's constant fall guy, the butt of nearly every gag, he bounces back. If the strip has a moral, it's to be found in the resiliency of this hardworking, good-hearted little man.

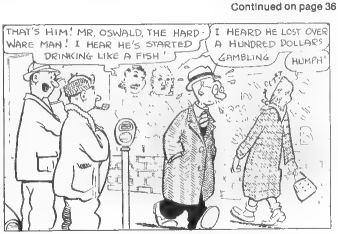
As in many strips, the central character (Oswald) is often overshadowed by the supporting characters—who tend to contrast Oswald's Everyman normality with pure insanity. Since the audience of the strip was primarily hardware store *owners*, the customers often come across as unfeeling, slightly wacky opportunists; and the salesmen who approach Oswald are shown to be manipulative connivers. Meanwhile, Oswald's employees are usually well-meaning but often bumbling (particularly the undersized Herman Hammers, hired during WWII as a "temporary fill-in" and still employed there today); and his relatives are leeches, with even his wife buying items from the dreaded enemy: the chain store.

What is remarkable about all this is that even the most unsympathetic characters are handled in a gentle, very human manner. Johnson—like Oswald—doesn't hate anybody (not for long, anyway). Further, the hardware setting (and the very narrow audience the strip aimed at) hinders "Mr. Oswald" not a whit; it's as accessible as any great comic strip... and "Mr. Oswald" *is* a great comic strip.

If it's going too far to call it a classic, it's fair to call it a minor classic—

Continued on page 36

SEE! THERE IT IS! MR OSWALD WAS ARRESTED LAST NIGHT FOR BEATING HIS WIFE!
SEE WHAT?
WHY WOULD I HAVE A LIGHT BILL AT THE COUNTY SEAT?
2


THAT'S HIM! MR. OSWALD, THE HARDWARE MAN! I HEAR HE'S STARTED DRINKING LIKE A FISH!
I HEARD HE LOST OVER A HUNDRED DOLLARS GAMBLING
HUMPH!

Games

By Steve Perrin

MORE ON MARVEL

The *Marvel Super Heroes* (tm) game is now on the stands, and it should certainly point some people towards superhero role-playing. Possibly the best part of the game—from the point of view of the rest of the game companies—is the system for creating your own character.

This system has a lot of holes. Its random rolling for superpowers gives excellent opportunities for rolling up the Awesome Feebleman, but the authors wisely allowed for the possibility of simply choosing the powers wanted and creating the character the player wants. This is one of the main selling points of both *Champions* and *Superworld*. This will encourage players to progress on to other game systems, just as fantasy role-players have progressed from D & D and A D & D to other fantasy games, such as *RuneQuest*.

As of this writing, more than a month after the basic game was issued, most of the promised support material for the game has not appeared. The X-Men module and the gamemaster screen finally came out at the Origins game convention in Dallas at the end of June, but so far there is no Avengers module, no 25mm figures, no Endless Quest books. There is still hope, though. From long experience I know the hassles that can happen to stall publications, and I, for one, look forward to the figures.

MAYFAIR GETS DC CONTRACT

Mayfair Games, initially famous for having the first game out on the Falklands war before it was over, have been acquiring a lot of literary licenses to base games on. As rumored in this column in the July issue, they made a bid for a DC comics role-playing game. Apparently they have succeeded. President Darwin Bromley confirms that they have the game rights, but cannot release details about when it will be out. Predictably, the first module planned involves the Teen Titans.

Part of the production time-lag no doubt involves changes in the game. These include substituting DC references for the Marvel references in the text. This game was originally prepared for Marvel before their contract was voided by Cadence management.

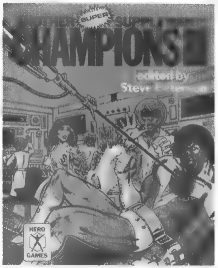
In many ways, Mayfair getting the DC contract is something of a disappointment to me. Before they got the contract, Mayfair was going to publish the game as an independent superhero game—*Superhero*. This would have been the first real challenge to DC and Marvel's trademark on that word. What would give the challenge teeth is that Darwin Bromley is a highly reputable lawyer as well as game publisher. Alas, what might have been a precedent-setting court battle is not to be.

IN OTHER NEWS

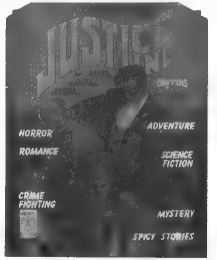
Havoc is the newest *Superworld* offering from Chaosium Inc. Cooperation between game companies is working very well these days, and this book of scenarios will have character statistics for the big three independent superhero games, *Superworld*, *Champions* and *Villains & Vigilantes*. This book introduces the players to *Havoc*, a supervillain mercenary group, plus one lost race living deep in the earth and a star-spanning race of colonizers.

From The Deeps Of Space is a new *Villains & Vigilantes* scenario from Fantasy Games Unlimited, and matches V & V heroes against the machinations of interstellar invaders. FGU also provides *Battle Above The Earth* dealing with yet another crew of desperate aliens who have taken over the space station. In the spirit of cooperation between game companies, this may be the first V & V scenario to include the translation guidelines for *Villains & Vigilantes* to *Superworld*.

Hero Games has issued *Champions III*, a collection of new rules, powers, forms and other material for enhancing



play of their superhero game. At the same time, they have published *Justice, Inc.*, for those of you whose in-



terest in heroics goes beyond four color action to the pulp heroes of the thirties. New skills, powers appropriate to the genre, and lots of atmosphere. The cover art is by Brian Hamilton, son of pulp artist Frank Hamilton and evokes the covers of a thousand pulp magazines.

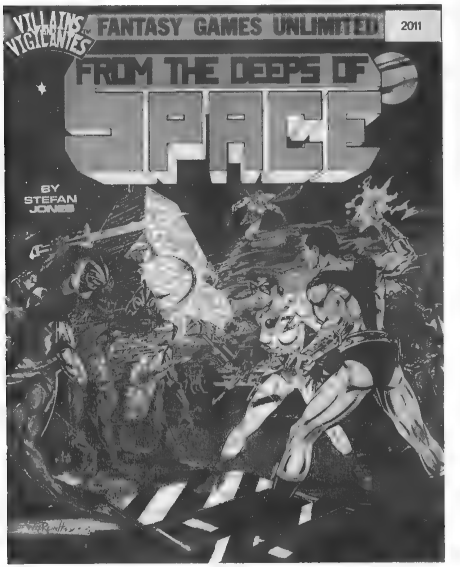
Upcoming from Hero Games is their second Organization Book, featuring *Primus*—the government super-soldier project—and *Demon*—a Satan-worshipping gangster operation.

The boys at Hero have also licensed Firebird Limited to produce Champions modules. The first one will be *The Golden Age Of Champions* and concerns itself with using a 1940s atmosphere for a Champions campaign.

Jim Steranko fans will be interested in *Heroes Unlimited*, a new superhero role-playing game from Palladium Press which sports a Steranko cover. It should be hitting the stands in August.

GATEWAYS TO ADVENTURE: HINTS FOR NEW GAMEMASTERS

Beginning gamemasters look for ideas on what to run for their players.



One solution is to buy some of the modules mentioned above or their predecessors and either run them verbatim, or adapt the characters and situations to your own campaign.

I have found that the *Villains & Vigilantes* scenarios have two advantages. One, there are many of them—about 10 as of this writing. Each has a coherent plotline and some interesting villains. The second advantage is that V & V is a fairly loose rules set, with lots of space for the gamemaster and player to finagle just the right special effects for the powers of the character. This looseness can sometimes hinder their use in V & V, as the players burrow through the rules looking for guidelines on just how a character's version of a power works in relation to all the other varieties of the power. Paradoxically, the characters described in these scenarios are usually very adaptable to both *Champions* and *Superworld*. When I playtested *Superworld* I often used V & V scenarios to frame the situation. It worked admirably.

Most publications by FGU, Hero Games and Chaosium have lots of villains for the gamemaster to use anywhere he wants to. After awhile, though, it gets very tiresome to just set up a bank, take a half-dozen villains out of one of the books and try to come up with a reason for the heroes to be on the scene. In comics, this sort of adventure is usually the beginning of a story, not the end. Authors use the bank-robbery-in-progress opening scene to start the story out with the hero in costume and doing what he does best, duking it out with badguys. From this point the action can go on to what the author really wants to write about.

The gamemaster is in the same boat as the author. Unless he and his players are ready either for six hours or more of activity, or to continue the game at a later date, starting with a bank robbery can take up the whole gaming time. Because of the complexity of super powers, superbattles take time, no matter what system you are using. The more characters in-

Continued on page 32

THE ARTISTIC LIFE

By Stephen Bissette

THE SWAMP THING PAPERS PART 2

As I recollect, when I left off I was trying to tell you how it all began, not only for John Totleben and myself with our current efforts as artists for DC's *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing*, but for the Swamp Thing himself... er, *itself*. It all began with "It" from the mind of Theodore Sturgeon, as far as I can tell. And it began with Len Wein and Berni Wrightson in the guise of a single story in the pages of *House Of Secrets #92*, which begat the first *Swamp Thing* series, which festered for a decade and spawned the movie *Swamp Thing*, which begat a new series for the character, *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing*. Which leads me to telling you a little bit about myself and amigo John Totleben, and how we finally fit into this frenzy.

The Saga Of The Swamp Thing had kept our friend Tom Yeates more than busy for better than a year with the book's demanding art chores, and by the fall of '82 Tom had set his mind on moving on to other things. Once he'd made the decision, he was quick to contact John and I with the idea of our taking on the book together. "Why *you* guys?", you may ask. Well, lemmee tell ya....

Both John and I had pitched in to help Tom during his run on the series: John had pencilled and/or inked with Tom since SOTST #2 and #3, and worked especially hard on #10, earning co-artist credit, while I had laid out nearly all of #8 from Marty's script and helped a bit on the climactic Golem pages of #11. We both had a pronounced obsession with the monstrous and bizarre. We knew we worked well together (having just completed a black and white Dracula story, "The Blood Bequest", for *Bizarre Adventures*). We

both knew deep down that if we were going to take on a regular on-going four-color comic, *Swamp Thing* was it... there were no other horror titles to work on by that time, and John especially had a strong affinity for the Swamp Thing character. Besides, each of us separately had reached the ends of our ropes freelancing on whatever we could find. In an industry flush with super-heroes, we were odd-men out, with absolutely no interest in the sort of long-john antics that seem to dominate every niche of the comics industry. While together in New Jersey again for two weeks, designing monster figurines for TSR (Dungeons and Dragons) with cronies Tim Truman, Rick Veitch, Ron Randall and Tom Mandrake, we squeezed in time to work up our samples to bring up to SOTST's editor, and the character's benevolent creator, Len Wein....

It began, for John, with that long-ago issue of *House Of Mystery #92*, with his love for Berni Wrightson's work (among others)... but it really began, he has told me, with *Swamp Thing #1*, and it was most definitely love at first sight. He revelled in the first ten issues, with Wrightson so vividly delineating Wein's prose. He savored Nestor Redondo's version of the character. He suffered through the bitter decline and fall as all the followers of the title did and he lost all interest once Swamp Thing became sidekick to the Challengers of the Unknown, Super Friends, etc. Ah, but he never forgot what had been, and how it had felt, and how *he* would do the book if he ever got that chance.

Well, enough purple prose, that's for John to tell for himself... from me it's just hearsay. I do know that once Tom got the book, John was eager to pitch in whenever he could. At some point during Tom's early issues, John showed Len this page of art he'd worked up on his own, a somewhat subdued, Redondoish vision of Swamp Thing. It didn't exactly set Len's pants on fire, and looked a bit too man-like in

1983 D.C. Comics. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

This drawing got Bissette and Totleben the job working on Swamp Thing.

size and anatomy. Which was the same mistake I made with my first sketches of the character.

It began, for me, with an abiding fascination with all things green and grotesque: bugs, lizards, frogs, Gumby, Gorgo, Godzilla, Swamp Thing. It began with getting off on the wrong foot completely: trying to arrive at a credible depiction of the Swamp Thing

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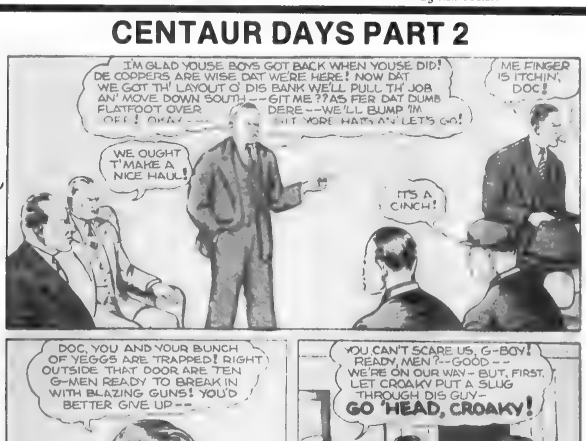
LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

CENTAUR DAYS PART 2


I'M GLAD YOUSE BOYS GOT BACK WHEN YOUSE DID! DE COPPERS ARE WISE DAT WE'RE HERE! NOW DAT WE GOT TH' LAYOUT O' DIS BANK WE'LL PULL TH' JOB AN' MOVE DOWN SOUTH---GIT ME??AS FER DAT DUMB DERE--WE'LL BUMP 'IM AT YORE HATS AN' LET'S GO!
ME FINGER IS ITCHIN', DOC!
WE OUGHT T'MAKE A NICE HAUL!
IT'S A CINCH!
DOC, YOU AND YOUR BUNCH OF YEGGS ARE TRAPPED! RIGHT OUTSIDE THAT DOOR ARE TEN G-MEN READY TO BREAK IN WITH BLAZING GUNS! YOU'D BETTER GIVE UP--
YOU CAN'T SCARE US, G-BOY! READY, MEN?--GOOD--WE'RE ON OUR WAY--BUT, FIRST, LET CROAKY PUT A SLUG THROUGH DIS GUY--
GO 'HEAD, CROAKY!

The Centaur folks, as mentioned in our previous installment, had a knack for cooking up catchy comic book names and were just about the only outfit to include descriptive adjectives in their titles. While DC christened their mystery magazine with the straightforward *Detective Comics*, Centaur called theirs a more impressive *Keen Detective Funnies*. Ostensibly this was a magazine devoted to a single theme, the first in the mystery and detection category since *Detective Comics*. And there were, as we'll see, some minor mysteries surrounding the birth of *Keen Detective Funnies*.

Edited by Lloyd Jacquet, the magazine made its debut in the summer of 1938. The first issue was numbered Vol. 1, Number 8, which leads to speculation on what we might call "The Mystery of the Missing Issues". The *Overstreet Price Guide* offers a possible solution, suggesting that *Keen Detective* might be a continuation of *Detective Picture Stories*. That book commenced late in 1936 and, after seven issues, folded in the middle of 1937. The numbering is right

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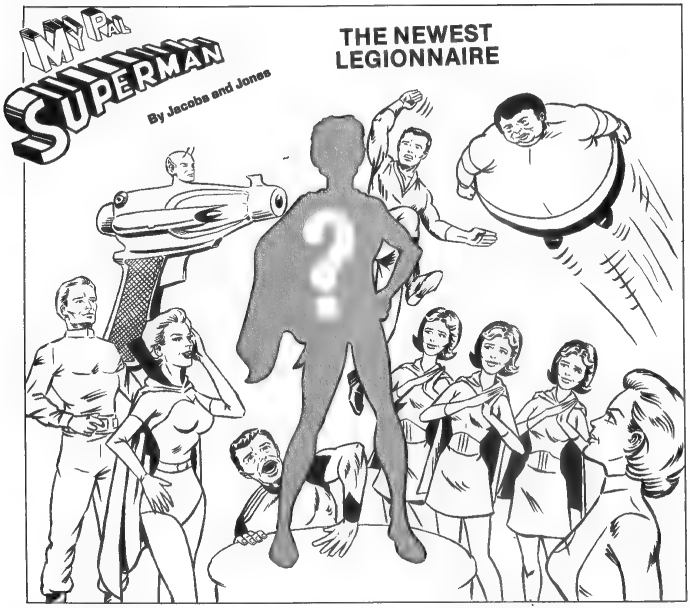


Superman tapped on the window while I was in the middle of a story. Ordinarily, he just bores through walls to get into a room, but I asked him not to because I have a finicky landlady. I opened the window and he flew in.

"Hi pal," he said.

"Hi pal," I said.

"Did I interrupt anything?" he asked.

"Oh no, I was only writing," I said.

"Can I read it?" he asked.

"Well, it's not finished yet," I said. He looked hurt, so I added hastily, "I would like your opinion, though. After all, you're getting to be quite knowledgeable about literature."

"Thanks, Will," he said, going to my desk. "By the way, I really enjoyed *The Sun Also Rises.*"

"Great. What did you think of the scene in which Jake and Bill go fishing in the mountains? Wasn't Hemingway's description of the wine being so cold that it hurt the backs of their eyes just great?"

"I wouldn't know anything about pain," he mumbled. I could tell he was already absorbed in my story.

I lit a cigarette and paced nervously, waiting for his judgment. But I knew that his opinion wouldn't really matter, since even Superman couldn't be objective about a story based on himself.

"I have a question, Will," he said, "Who's Ken Clarkson?"

"Why, that's you, Kal, in your secret identity," I said. "Just as the editors of DC Comics use the name Clark Kent to conceal your real secret identity from their fans, so do I use the name Ken Clarkson to conceal your secret identity from my potential readers."

"Well then, who's Wayne Brewster?" he asked.

"The Batman's secret identity, of course," I said.

"And who's Lois Lang?"

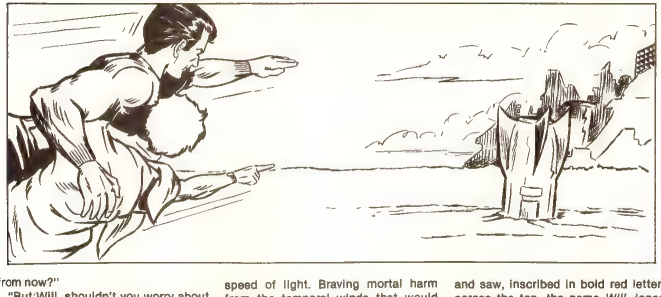
"Your perky co-reporter at the newspaper."

"And who's Will Jones?"

"Why me, of course. As you might put it, if I went by my real name, Jerry Jacobs, my life would be constantly threatened by your many foes in the underworld and throughout time and space."

"Your writing really seems to be coming along, Will."

"Maybe so, Kal," I said. "But will people remember me a thousand years



from now?"

"But Will, shouldn't you worry about getting published first?"

"Sure," I said. "There's that. But every creative artist dreams of immortality for his works and fears the thought of someday being forgotten. I'm sure you understand, Superman. You're always present at the ceremonial unveilings of the many statues and monuments erected in your honor throughout the universe."

He looked thoughtful and absentmindedly fumbled for a cigarette in the pack I'd left on the desk. "Is this really getting you down, Will?"

"It has been ever since I read the *Illiad*. I was awed that any book could survive for so many centuries and felt despondent that my books, if I ever break into print, that is, might be forgotten mere decades after my death."

Superman mulled over my words for a few moments, puffing on the cigarette he had lit with his heat-vision, and said, "There's only one way we can find out for sure."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Simple. We can take a little trip into the future."

"No kidding?" I exclaimed.

"Now that I think about it," Superman said, "I haven't visited my friends in the Legion of Super-Heroes for quite some time. We can kill two birds with one stone."

"Great!" I said. "The Legion of Super-Heroes!"

INTO THE FUTURE

Without further ado he bundled me in his cape, opened the window, and shot into the sky, instantly exceeding the speed of light. Braving mortal harm from the temporal winds that would have buffetted me to death if not for the indestructible cape that enfolded my body, I uncovered my eyes for a peak at the trans-temporal landscape. Sure enough, we were speeding through a tunnel of multi-colored concentric rings, the dates posted between each ring in blurry black numerals. Within moments, we materialized in front of the Legion clubhouse in the year 2982.

Maybe you're like me, and you've always wondered how the Legion clubhouse can be so vast indoors yet appear so unimposing from the exterior. But believe me, this discrepancy is the fault of the comic book artist; I guess architecture just wasn't his forte. The place is huge, easily dwarfing the World Trade Center.

As we landed on Legion Plaza, a welcoming committee of Legionnaires emerged from the clubhouse. I immediately recognized Saturn Girl, Triplicate Girl, Bouncing Boy, Brainiac 5 and Princess Projectra, all dressed in their colorful Legion garb.

I expected Superman to introduce me, but before he had a chance to do so, the Legionnaires crowded around me, exclaiming in chorus, "It's the Bard! The Bard himself!"

THE BARD OF THE 30TH CENTURY

I didn't know what they were talking about at first, until I noticed that they all carried books in their hands. Triplicate Girl was the first to shove hers at me, requesting my autograph.

My heart beat a tatoo against my chest as I took the book from her hands and saw, inscribed in bold red letters across the top, the name *Will Jones*. But even more surprising than seeing my name was realizing that the title of the book was totally unfamiliar to me. Here I was, 1,000 years in the future, about to autograph a book I hadn't even written yet.

"Can I take a look at this book?" I asked.

"Er... there'll be plenty of time for that later," said Superman. "Now let's have the Legionnaires give you a tour of their clubhouse. I'll tell you what, Will. I'll leave you here with the teenage Legion of Superheroes, who are better known to you from the comics, while I fly a little further into the future to visit my pals in the adult Legion."

When I saw the way all the girls were looking at me, I hoped Superman wouldn't hurry back. "Wow," I thought, "Saturn Girl sure has a nice pair of... er..." But I suddenly remembered her powers of telepathy and blocked my thoughts. Looking at Princess Projectra, I wondered if any of her famed illusions could match the reality of her beauty.

Then Bouncing Boy said, "Here in the thirtieth century, we consider you a literary immortal, Will."

"Well, I am ahead of my time," I said.

As we passed through the giant glass doors into the Legion clubhouse, Brainiac 5 said, "This is the Legion lobby and reception area, housing a 30th century Mental Projector which plays a perpetual tape recounting the origin of the Legion."

"That's very interesting," I said, as convincingly as I could.

From there we went up to Level 1, where the arsenal and atomic power

Continued on page 40

Dick Giordano may be best known as Executive Editor of DC Comics. There he speaks to millions of readers in his "Meanwhile..." column each month. Or perhaps it is as an artist, where his works include *Batman* and *Green Lantern* as well as the upcoming *Jonni Thunder* mini-series. Or even as an inker, in classic combination with Neal Adams (with whom he formed Continuity Associates) or as he continues today, mostly inking many of the DC covers.

In short, a man of many talents. His work spans thirty years as inker, artist, writer, editor, Managing Editor at Charlton Comics (where he discovered a lot of what many already consider today's "old pros") and then a similar run through for DC Comics. Now he stands at the head of a team of editors dedicated to putting out monthly comic books of the highest quality.

His job forces him to think ahead. He has many interesting and exciting plans for next year already passed on to the people who will impliment the ideas. 1985 is DC's Fiftieth Anniversary year. Giordano is determined that it will be a milestone in comic book history.

I spoke with him in his office at DC Comics, where he snatched an hour to relax and talk about his past and DC's future. He is forceful and energetic, but with a strong sense of humor, tied into an occasional hit that he doesn't take himself entirely *too* seriously....

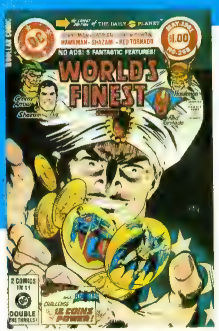
Dick Giordano

DC'S 50th ANNIVERSARY

By John Peel

All DC covers and interior art copyright DC Comics, Inc.

"Soon I came to the point where I needed to draw my own characters, and so I have been drawing comic book material in one shape or another since I was seven years old."



BEGINNINGS

He was born on the Lower East Side of New York City, "the Italian ghetto of that time". Talking about his start in the comics field, he dates it from this time. "I was sickly," he explained, "and spent a lot of time in bed. My father bought me some comic books when they first came out. As matter of fact, it was *Famous Funnies*, which was one of the first of the newsstand comic books. I was enthralled by the idea of reading three or four weeks of the Sunday funny reprints at one time.

"I started tracing pictures of The Little King, based on my interest in comics at that time. Soon I came to the point where I needed to draw my own characters, and so I have been drawing comic book material in one shape or another since I was seven years old." He laughed a little at this, and gestured to his door. "I think if you run up and down the hall and ask everybody here, they'll give you the same story about themselves, though with variations! It might have been twelve years old for them—or five if they were precocious! Basically, however, it's the same story as mine. I think that is also true of most comic book fans who have never taken the step to becoming professionals.

"When it came time to make a selection for high school education, I chose the School of Industrial Arts, here in New York City. One of the advantages of a large city like this is that there are a number of vocational public high schools that will provide training in just about anything you could be interested in getting trained in. The film *Fame* was shot at the High School of Music and Art here in New York—and that was one of the choices for me at that time. Both of the schools are still in existence, and still providing education for people who are interested in the theatrical arts or the commercial arts.

"I learned a little bit about cartooning during that period of time. I did not, unfortunately, choose comic books as a major while I was in the school. I was talked out of it by my guidance counsellor, who told me that there would be no real way for me to make my living as a cartoonist, and therefore I should try my hand at illustration and advertising art. And, being young and stupid, I listened to him!" He chuckled, and commented on the training he did receive: "I learned a great deal about drawing shirts and couches and all kinds of interesting things like that!"

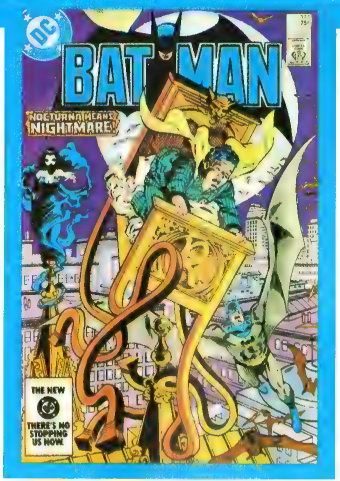
Leaving school in January of 1951, he went job-hunting. "Just by accident I walked into a place that was producing comic books," he admitted. "I thought it was an advertising studio. Lo and behold, I was back in comics again! Schooling had actually interrupted my comics education," he paraphrases Samuel Clemens.

CHARLTON TIMES

Literally by accident, Dick had found his niche, and was offered a staff job at the Jerry Iger Studio. He explained that "long time fans will remember that Iger and Will Eisner (creator of *The Spirit*) were partners at one time." Those days were over, and Iger now had his own studio. "I can only liken it to a factory," Dick reminisced. "It was indeed a factory operation in that the pencilled pages would mysteriously appear on the table at the start of the morning, and the pages would be passed from hand to hand, with each person inking his own specialty on that page. I started out inking backgrounds, while someone else inked the heads, someone else the women, someone else the men. Some lettered it, and at the end of the day the pencilled pile would have changed into an inked pile. No one had any real interest in the work because it was too split up for anyone to get any real job satisfaction from the end result.

"That lasted only one year—great training, great background. Then in 1952 I found out that Charlton Comics had an editor who was looking for some new artists. I applied for the position—on New Year's Day. The editor, Al Fago, was visiting a relative of his near by my home. I was living in the Bronx at this time. I went round to visit him, and got the job on the spot. I spent from 1952 to 1965 with at least some of my time during all of those years being devoted to drawing for Charlton Comics.

"I started out as an inker for Al Fago, then did a little pencilling, then pencil and inking, on a wide variety of work. This culminated in 1959 in my being given a role as assistant to the editor. In 1965, after a period back at freelancing, I was given the Executive Editor's position. So I was pretty much running the company for two years. I've always felt—and still do in many ways—that this two year period at Charlton was my most creative time. Not that the results were the most creative, but because I had so little to work with. Working in the fashion that I was forced to work, with so few resources, it was amazing that the results were as good as they were.



"Simply put, Charlton was a company that did not have a vast interest in their comic line. There was little money to spend, and I had a miniscule staff. It was essentially a factory operation in that the editorial offices, the printing plant, the engraving plant and the shipping plant were all in the same building. I had virtually total control over all of those things; I really worked as a sort of plant supervisor in a way. I scheduled the work for all of the various departments in the plant, not just the editorial content.

"When I came to Charlton as their managing editor, I found I had a staff of about a half a dozen people who were on salary, and who I was absolutely obligated to use. And a handful of freelancers who were, for the most part, the left-overs that the other publishers—DC and Marvel at that time—had no interest in. I had a mandate to improve comic production and to introduce some new material. We were not, at the time when I arrived, seriously into the superhero business in a market where superheroes were starting their sudden about-face with the readers.

RESTRUCTURING CHARLTON

"What I then needed to do," he explained, "was to accumulate a staff at the amount of money then being spent, because I was not able to change their minds about the amount of money being spent. I had to build up a staff who were a little like myself, who were willing to take chances, because they weren't going to get rich, and produce a line of superhero books that was credible. As well as improving all of the other books! The other books numbered at that time thirty-four titles that were being produced on a regular basis. They were all bi-monthly, so there were only 17 books a month, but my staff consisted of a secretary, a board artist to make changes, and a typist, who did most of the lettering on a typewriter. I don't know if you're familiar with the books, but the lettering was credited to 'A. Machine', which is exactly what it was—it was lettered on *a machine*!

"In any case, I started by going through the files and looking at samples which had been left off by a number of artists who had never been answered, for one reason or another. Among those artists were Jim Aparo, Pat Boyette and a number of other people. Steve Ditko was kind of on the staff at that time, but he was doing some of his best work on *Spider-Man*. Steve and I had always been friendly, and somehow we got back together, and one-by-one, in a piecemeal fashion, I added people to the staff. To be able to do what I was mandated to do.

"In terms of generating the money to get it done, I concocted a plan and sold it to my employer whereby the rates changed. The rates at that time were the same for everyone; for example, the art rate was $20 per page. No distinctions, no matter who did it. What I asked for instead was a per-book budget. We added up the budget for each book, and I asked for that, plus a nominal increase—six or eight percent—and asked them to guarantee me this amount of money to spend, and to let me decide how to spend it. He agreed to that, and what I did was to establish a system of economies in order to accumulate the money to pay people like Steve Ditko, Denny O'Neil, who was part of that group, Steve Skeates and a number of other people who have since proved that they have more than adequate talent. Part of those economies came from buying a number of romance, war and western pages from South America at a very much reduced rate. The additional money then went towards paying those other guys.

"I did covers on staff—I drew some of the covers myself, in the office, so I wouldn't have to pay for the covers, and I could use that money. We had accumulated a lot of text pages over the years, so I reprinted those. Nobody read them anyway! So reprinting them didn't make any difference. Then what we did was that the people who were involved in the creative process and myself spent a lot of time on the handful of superhero books—the books that I myself had some kind of interest in. There was some variety; I enjoyed working on *Go-Go*, which was sort of a humor book, *The Many Ghosts Of Doctor Graves*, which was kind of interesting, and *Charlton Premiere*,

"Simply put, Charlton was a company that did not have a vast interest in their comic line. There was little money to spend, and I had a miniscule staff."

which was a bi-monthly potpourri—and the five or six superhero books. I worked very closely with the people who worked on those concepts. Most of the other books that were published by Charlton I traffic managed at that time, but I devoted most of my time to the main books.

"Steve Ditko was most of the creative push on *The Question*, *Blue Beetle* and *Captain Atom*, no matter what the credits were. There was Gil and Pat Boyette on *Peacemaker*. And Jim Aparo helped around at that time on a couple of things. He did some work on *Go-Go*, *Ghostly Tales* and *Charlton Premiere*. There was a lot done in a short period of time, with no money and no people. I had to find the people first, then I had to find the money to make the whole thing work."

NOW AT DC...

"Here at DC it's completely different. You walk in the door, and the company has a reasonable budget to work with, and we have a staff of really competant, professional people."

Dick left Charlton in 1967, after his two year stint as Executive Editor, and came over to work for DC. "Since then, I've been doing at DC what I had done at Charlton earlier," he commented. "I've done it all—some pencilling, some inking. I was a line editor for a while, and now I'm Executive Editor of this company. It took a lot more time than it sounds to do all that!

"I've been in this business for thirty-three years. It doesn't feel that long—I'm still enjoying it! I wake up every day, and I'm amazed that I'm still enjoying it. There aren't many people, I think, after that length of time in basically the same job that are still enjoying it. But I find it challenging still, daily.

"I spend four hours a day commuting, two hours in and two hours going home. The day here tends to be very intense and very hectic. An interlude like this is quite welcome," he confessed, "where I can sit down and chat amiably for a couple of minutes! It's a very high-pressure job. In some ways, the pressure is part of the fun of it. If you're in comics for any length of time you learn to live with daily deadlines. Publication work is like that. Comic books is the epitome of that way of working because there are constant deadlines on one aspect or another of every book. Our regular line is 32 titles, and add to that the deluxe format—another 9 or 10 titles—and then the annuals, mini-series and so forth. There's literally a deadline every ten minutes around here. You learn to live with that."

Deadlines aren't entirely bad things to have. "I've never been able to draw a correlating line between the time it takes you to do something and the creative value of the work produced," he said. "More often than not, as a matter of fact, I feel that I do my best work under severe time limitations. Part of it is that it is more spontaneous—I think that's obvious—but part of it is also that the adrenaline gets pumping when the time factor enters into it, and you are able to focus more clearly on the objectives of the job at hand. And you eliminate a lot of the perhaps interesting but almost self-defeating side-trips that can find their way into everything you're doing and get down to what is needed. I know I've done some of my best work under very severe time pressure."

DC'S EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Just what is his responsibility and duty as Executive Editor at DC? "My active professional life at DC splits up into two distinctly separate parts," he commented. "One has to do with the time that I spend in the office, and the other, of course, is my freelance time." Of his official position, he elaborates, "It's a job that has grown tremendously over the past few years. It started out very easy-going, but has ended up as far more difficult than I had any reason to believe it ever would become. Maybe I would not have taken the job if I knew it would get to this." Even as he said this, he laughed. You can tell that he doesn't mean this at all; the challenge of the job is still irresistible to him.

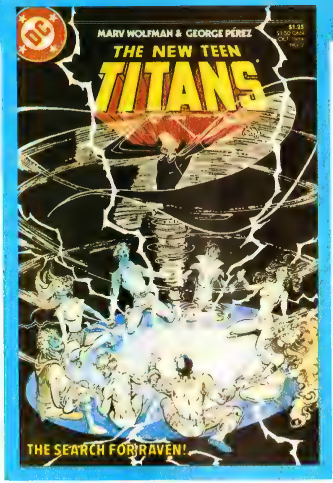
"What I've been doing over the past year is hiring people, and working with the people that are already in place, to try and turn over some of my administrative duties to them." (These changes and hirings were covered in the news section of *Comics Feature* #30.) "These people are better qualified, I think, to handle the administrative duties, so that I can spend more time on the creative end of things.

"Basically what my job is, if I were to describe it briefly, is to establish company policy and to determine the editorial approach to the company's production for the foreseeable future. Whereas the rest of the people out there in the other editorial offices are working on material that is going to be published this year, the work that I'm concerned with at this moment is 1985. And I'm winding down my plans for '85. I'm starting to think about '86. The

long-range publishing plans of this company are my first responsibility; secondly, to impliment those plans with the best people that are available. I am to be the shaker, the mover, the one who gets things going, so that people are working on material far in advance of when it's supposed to appear.

"Currently my job is also to get the trains running on time," he added. "We've had problems with books being late. I'm going to admit that the trains are late because of me, and they're going to get back on time because of me. They're late not through sloth, but because I've felt it was imperative to change an attitude that existed in the company about the material needing to be on time, and all other considerations were pushed aside. I wanted to take all those 'other considerations' and focus on that—the creative content. If it took more time, then it took more time. That led to us shipping some books late, and before I could stop it, it got out of hand. I'm not accustomed to that kind of domino effect, where the first book shipping late means that the second book ships late without your having anything to say about it. Now we have to build that whole structure up again.

"You see, what we did was to change our whole focus—now time is important, but it's more important for there to be some content. That means having the same artist on the book for a period of time, so that the artist and script-writer become associated with that title, giving it some feeling of continuity. The trains ran on time before for a very simple reason. For example, five different *Batman* scripts might be assigned to five different writers at the same time. When these came into the office, they would be assigned to different artists and finally whichever came into the office fully-drawn first would be the next issue of *Batman*. Certainly, if you're doing four or five issues at a time by different people it's easier to remain on schedule. When you start writing and drawing strips in continuity, where you insist on aligning yourself with a particular artist and a particular author for a particular title, you must suffer what they suffer. If your artist gets a cold, you ship late. If your writer sneezes, you're a day behind schedule. It comes down to that. I wasn't involved enough in the day-to-day operations to stop the problems that existed before. I'm more involved in it now, and will stop it."



AND IN MY SPARE TIME...

Being an Executive Editor might sound like it was quite enough work for one man, but Dick Giordano isn't content to let it stop there. "One of my terms of employment was that I was not asked to give up my drawing," he explained. "It's too important for me personally and professionally to be a part of that end of the creative mix. I will admit that what I do *here* is creative, but in a different way. I'm instructing other people in doing things that they do best. I kind of like the idea that I can go home and turn off that part of it. Then I'm working for *my* editor—when I'm drawing, the editor of whatever book I'm working on is my boss at that point. I'm not in charge—I'm doing what I'm told to.

"I have to admit that just the peace of being by myself is worth the time that I have to put into it," he smiled. "This is not a solitary existence down here! I have people coming to my door all the time. I have people on the phone, or sitting next to me all the time. And it's kind of nice, when I'm at home, to sit in my studio by myself and make drawing decisions that focus only on the page that I'm looking at at that moment, and not on the big picture which I have to contend with here regularly. The contrasts are very interesting. I enjoy this work, but I could not give up the drawing."

His years as a freelance artist have left their mark on him, he admits. "The freelance mentality is such that you can't put it aside. I've refused, for example, to consider the possibility of them putting my freelance income into my salary, and then be able to draw without getting paid separately for it. I have to do this page, and know that I'll get X amount of money at the completion of it. I need to have that—if I'm going to meet deadlines I have to be paid for the quantity of work that I do *when* I do it.

"Currently as a freelancer I'm pen-

"I am to be the shaker, the mover, the one who gets things going..."

chiling and inking a mini-series that's being written by Roy Thomas—*Jonni Thunder.* It's been a long time in the hopper—the storyline was approved some two years ago. Finally I decided I'd very much like to do it, and Roy and I are working on that right now. That'll be out towards the end of this year. Aside from that, almost all of my other assignments tend to be inking assignments, primarily cover and special project inking. But I also do an occasional book. It's surprising to me to discover that working part-time I'm producing as much work as about half of my free-lance staff. They are all doing it full-time, yet I produce about as much work as about half of them can, in a lot less hours."

Asked to explain how he managed this, he thought for a moment. "It's a combination of things," he suggested. "I'm very productive—my working time is *working* time. I learned many years ago that discipline is what a freelancer needs most in the world. Talent is wonderful, and all the other things are great, but if you do not have discipline, you cannot function properly. Clearly I can't turn creativity on and off at will—nobody can—but I've learned that no matter how uncreative I feel, there's always something that can be done on the job I'm working on. I can rule up straight lines, I can do background, I can fill in black areas—I can always do *something.* But I sit down and I start working at a certain time and I don't stop working until a certain amount of work is done. I have a really good idea of how much I'm capable of in a given period of time, and I don't set too high a goal for myself. But I do meet the goals that I set.

"I know, for example, that I can ink a page in about two hours. In an eight hour day, that means four pages inked. And when I start the day it's with the idea that I'm going to have inked four pages at the day's end. I allow two hours a page, and if I run over a little bit, I try and make it back on the next page. But at the end of the time, within a half hour of what I scheduled for myself, I've got those four pages done. What that does is to enable me to estimate how long it will take me to get a forty-page story done, for example. At four pages a day, I need ten days to do it in. I'll map out the working days that are available and I could tell you really within an hour of when I'll be finished with the job.

"So that enables me to be productive," he concluded. "I take my work and break it into smaller chunks of time. I do two hours every morning at my drawing board before I leave for the office. Then most weekends I spend at least a portion of the time at the drawing board. I'm an early riser, normally getting up at four o'clock—and that brings tears to the eyes of most people! But for me, it's a very comforting time to start working. It's quiet, and my energy level is high because I've just had a good night's sleep, so I start off at four o'clock, and work till six on weekdays. At six, I start getting ready to come down here. On weekends, I start at four o'clock, too, but basically so I can finish by twelve or so. Then I can spend some time with my family so that the whole weekend isn't spent sitting at the drawing board. Or I do whatever other people do—I consider myself a comics person, but there *are* other things in the world!"

MOVIES AND SWIMMING

That brought up the question as to what a man who works so much does to relax. He laughed. "I draw comic books to relax!" he protested. "I really do consider that my hobby. The fact that I get paid for it is a *wonderful* plus! I have very few interests that I like to do more than that, to be honest.

"I like spending time with my friends. I don't have too many, but they're very close friends. And most, if not all of those, are not connected with this business. I have *many* wonderful friends in the business, but they tend to be more casual. We get together once in a while socially, but we see each other so often professionally!

"I enjoy swimming. I have a swimming pool in my back yard, a fairly good, large in-ground pool that I use during the summertime. I enjoy seeing films that are worthwhile seeing—if I don't know for a fact that it's going to be a good film, I'm not going to strain to hear something I'm not going to enjoy anyway." He has to wear a hearing aid, as he was left slightly deaf after an adult bout with a childhood ailment.

What sort of movies does he like? "*Raiders Of The Lost Ark* was just as much fun for me as *Ordinary People,*" he said. "They're diametrically opposed films, but they're enjoyable. I have as much good fun with fantasies as with those that deal with real issues. *Kramer Versus Kramer* was a film that I particularly enjoyed; *Ordinary People* was a wonderful film, as was *Flashdance.*" He pulled an envelope from his inside pocket with a grin—it contained two tickets to the premiere of *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom,* an invitation from Paramount that particularly pleased him.

He sees that a lot of adventure movies have their roots in comics. "Even though *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* became a comic after the movie," he observes, "clearly it was a comic book on film. As was *Star Wars*. As a matter of fact, I think that we're going to see more and more of that. I think that comics are becoming a more acceptable entertainment form than at any time previously. Not only because the direct sales market means that the older readers have taken comic books into their bosom, but I'm beginning to see the creative people having a different viewpoint about comics."

INTO THE FUTURE

He sees the comic industry as being in a state of change, and DC as being at the head of this change. In the future, changes will be even more intense, if possible. "We're going to be more interested in publishing ventures that lead us to a new audience," he said. "there *is* heroic fantasy in series like *Camelot 3000*, and it probably has a broader appeal than some others. But it is also a step up in the production of comic books. The writing and the artwork particularly are very, very skillful, and we're going to be looking more towards that.

"*Ronin* was not only successful from a sales viewpoint, but from a creative viewpoint. It certainly is a departure for anything done in comic books. And I'm trying to ensure that that kind of thought process goes into the production of our upcoming graphic novels. I am daily delaying the release of graphic novels so that we can make them better than graphic novels that have been released to date. Not only ours, but some of the competition's. Some of them have been good, but some of them have been a waste of paper.

"We've been talking to literary agents for the purpose of producing material for graphic novels. We're talking to people who have been writing books, and I'm surprised at how many of them are interested in getting into comics. Two came up just yesterday and spoke to our managing editor; and they said that they felt that the future was in comics. They have been writing trade paperbacks, but they felt that the real future for them would be in writing comics.

"People tend to be going to the graphics nowadays. Graphics are becoming more and more important, not only in entertainment but in information. Many, many people—about fifty percent—get all of their news from the television these days, and that means that the written word by itself is experiencing a fall from favor. A combination of the written word and graphics might be the right place to be, ten years from now.

"I'm very proud of the good production values of the direct comics. I hope that we're going to be doing more, because, incidentally, the rest of the world has taken a different view of things, we are often looking for cartoonists elsewhere. We've been doing an awful lot of business with British cartoonists, and Alan Moore is a wonderful writer. (He works on *Swamp Thing.)* Joe Orlando and I went to England about two years ago and met with several professionals there, and came away with the feeling that there was a wonderful supply of talent there. People who are accustomed to taking a little bit more time with what they did, and it's important to us if we're going to do another series like *Camelot.*

"One of the reasons why *Camelot* was possible is that Brian Bolland just refuses to rush his work. He cares little for our deadlines," he added with a laugh. "He is going to do the best work possible, and he pencils about two-and-a-half to three pages a week—that's his maximum output. Most of our pencillers do that in a day. But the difference in the quality level is apparent—you can *see* it. We're going to have to find a way to have more Brian Bollands work for us, and fewer people to do two or three pages a day. The difference in quality is clear."

The big problem with this is that since payment by the page is standard, clearly the more pages an artist turns out per day, the higher his income. "Yes, that's true," he agreed. "However, those economics were more relevant when we were selling comic books for twenty cents and without a direct sales market. It is now possible to consider doubling or tripling the amounts of money that we pay people. I'm not saying that we're going to do

that tomorrow, but the economics of it is such that it is more possible to think that way than it was before. Some people are actually making a great deal more money nowadays doing a little less work than they were doing a short while ago.

"Most writers used to do a hundred pages a month, and now most of them have cut down to fifty to seventy-five, and making more money for those pages than they were doing for the hundred. If you extrapolate on that, in a few years we'll be able to pay for twenty-five pages what we are now paying for fifty pages, with a resulting improvement in quality."

DELUXE BOOKS

The first steps in this direction have really been taken with the deluxe comics that are available only through comics specialty stores. Is the trend for the future being set now? "I think it's a start," Giordano observed. "I don't think that the deluxe comics are as deluxe as they could be, yet. If we have one out of five that *really* suits our fancy, it's a good average. But like with anything else, when a change comes, the change itself is the most important thing. The fact that we can print on something that's better than toilet paper is exciting! That's felt by most of our artists and writers. Now we've come to the conclusion that this is not enough—you have to do something that's important in order to qualify for that deluxe format. The work itself needs to be important to make the format work. Just taking the same old comics material and putting it into a deluxe package is not going to convince anybody for any length of time that they need to spend the extra money.

"Incidentally, we've slowed down our deluxe format releases for that very reason. Now we know that we can do it. We can print 50,000 copies offset and make enough money doing it, and the reproduction level is quite good. Now we have to start thinking what we're going to say in it. In my best world, we will produce three or maybe four different lines of comic books aimed at different audiences, which will have not only a different content, but a different format. Thus what is now our regular comic book will be aimed at a slightly lower audience, and will be less episodic in some ways, so that you don't need to read every issue in order to understand what is happening. The better production values will go into the deluxe format, which has to be sold through the direct sales market only, and which clearly has an older readership. And we have to start thinking about the kind of material that older readership wants. Do they want more *Vigilante* or do they want more *Camelot 3000*?

"That's what we're gearing up for, to produce more intellectual, more intelligent material."

MINIS AND MAXIS

Another of the more recent innovations in comic books is the mini- or maxi-series, where a complete story can be told, with a beginning, middle and an end. Is this another indication then of the way that comic books are going?

"I personally love the limited series idea," he agreed. "My plans for the future are *very* top-heavy in limited series. I feel the limited series has two or three major advantages. Firstly, the entire story can be structured like a novel, complete, and that structure is very important for a writer. One of the problems with an episodic series is that you have to leave your hero pretty much in the shape that you found him in, so that there's a potential for continuing, and real flux isn't possible. Batman, for example, has to go on for ever and ever, so there's not a lot we can do with him. But we all know that the characters in *Camelot 3000* can die by issue 12. So there is an aura of suspense about the series, because you know that nothing is absolute—we don't have to bring any of those characters back. And you can create plot changes and twists that you normally can't do. You can *change* things. That's true of all limited series.

"Secondly, from the creator's perspective, especially the artist's, he can now think of emptying all of his creativity into this very narrow group of books. Four books, or six, or twelve—it's going to end. You don't have to

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DC, FIRST COMICS JOIN IN PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

DC Comics Inc. of New York and First Comics, Inc. of Chicago will be joining forces in producing a number of comic book stories featuring characters published by each firm, executives of the two companies announced this weekend.

At the 1984 Chicago Comicon comic art show, DC Comics vice-presidents Dick Giordano and Paul Levitz met with First Comics' president Mike Gold and corporate secretary Rick Obadiah and concluded the agreement, which had been in discussion for nearly one year. Also involved in the formulation of the agreement was DC Comics' marketing director, Bruce Bristow.

The agreement calls for at least two such "team-ups" within the next two years. The first co-publication is expected to be released in time for the 1985 Chicago Comicon next summer, to commemorate the anniversary of the venture.

Giordano and Gold will be co-editing the stories, and various marketing and distribution tasks will be divided between the companies. DC will be taking primary responsibility for production work on one release, and First will take on those responsibilities on the other. These books will enjoy both newsstand distribution and "direct sales" release to the comics specialty market.

Characters will be selected from each company's cast of heroes. Founded in 1935, DC Comics is known for such characters as Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. Vastly younger by comparison, First Comics, organized in 1981, counts among its best-sellers such titles as Grimjack, American Flagg! and Jon Sable, Freelance.

"This is an extremely exciting opportunity for all of us," Levitz stated. "The comics medium has been infused with a great deal of new energy in recent years. We are delighted to work with First Comics, one of the leading new companies in the field."

At the Chicago Comicon announcement, Obadiah welcomed the opportunity as "representative of a new spirit of cooperation within the comics field." Obadiah, who is also publisher of First Comics, noted DC and First enjoy overlapping yet, to a certain extent, differing audiences. He sees this project as a method for each publisher to expand its respective market.

For Gold, the project is something of a homecoming, as he served as DC Comics' public relations director from 1976 to 1978. "I have a lot of friends at DC, and they handle some of the most exciting characters in the history of American entertainment. These crossovers hold unlimited storytelling possibilities."

"Giordano stated he was looking forward to the opportunity to produce some truly innovative comics. "In addition to the vast array of characters, we can also avail ourselves of an equally vast array of comics talent—between our two companies, much of the finest talent working the comics field today. Working cooperatively with these people is going to be a great pleasure."

Response to the announcements at the Chicago Comicon was extremely positive—from fans, retailers, and distributors alike. Much speculation was given to the actual composition of these team-ups. Fans will be polled at the upcoming Atlanta and Houston comic art conventions. Together with the opinions expressed at the Chicago show, First and DC will be able to make their decisions based upon reader demand.

In addition to Giordano, Gold, Levitz, Obadiah and Bristow, others working on the project include DC's publicity and special events manager Peggy May and editorial coordinator Pat Bastienne and First's associate editor Rick Oliver and sales manager Kathy Kotsivas.

THE P.I.'s: THE FIRST MINI-SERIES

First Comics will be releasing its initial mini-series this September with the launching of *The P.I.'s*, a three-part story featuring Michael Mauser and Ms. Tree, First Comics' managing

editor Mike Gold announced today.

The P.I.'s—private investigators—will headline the two famed comic sleuths in an adventure where their respective clients are each suspects in a murder mystery. Associates of both Michael Mauser and Ms. Tree will be featured in the story, including Mike Mist and Alec Tronn, A.K.A. E-Man.

Ms. Tree is the star of her own comic book published by Aardvark-Vanaheim. It was previously published by Eclipse Comics.

The P.I.'s will be scripted by Max Collins, writer of Ms. Tree, Dick Tracy and more than one dozen mystery novels. Ms. Tree artist Terry Beatty will be inking the series.

Joe Staton, writer/penciller of the E-Man series which prominently features Michael Mauser, will be penciling *The P.I.'s*. The three-issue mini-series will fit in to the established E-Man continuity; E-Man will be published on a bi-monthly schedule alternating with *The P.I.'s* for the length of the run.

"In last winter's readership survey, we received a surprising number of requests for a detective series," Gold noted. "Since Joe, Max and Terry have been talking about doing something together for quite some time, *The P.I.'s* was a natural.

"Indeed, sharp-eyed readers will note that Mauser has made a couple of background appearances in Terry Beatty's Ms. Tree work," Gold concluded.

AVENGERS/JUSTICE LEAGUE CROSSOVER APPROVED LAST SEPTEMBER

In response to an increasing number of inquiries from readers and retailers, Marvel Editor in Chief Jim Shooter stated that the proposed plot for the Avengers/Justice League team-up had been approved last September.

"Marvel's approval was given in a letter to Dick Giordano dated September 28, 1983," Shooter said. "To our knowledge, nothing has been done since that time."

SOL BRODSKY REMEMBERED

Marvel Comics and the entire industry lost one of its most respected and beloved professionals June 4, when Sol Brodsky died at age 61, following a brief illness.

Sol began work for Marvel (then known as Timely Comics) in the 1940s as a penciller and inker. He continued to work for Marvel at various times throughout the 1950s and was one of the major forces behind the birth of Marvel in the early 1960s.

As production manager during that time, Sol was Stan Lee's right hand man during the '60s, handling the scheduling and creative assignments and dealing with the printers, among other tasks.

Sol Brodsky will be sorely missed.

He is survived by his wife Selma, his son Gary and daughter Janice Cohen. The funeral was held June 8 in New York, at which time the following eulogy, written by Stan Lee, was read by John Romita:

"Not only have we lost a man we genuinely loved, but we've also lost someone who was very rare and very special. So many of the virtues which we all prize so highly, Sol possessed in abundance.

"I had known him for more than 30 years, and never heard him say a derogatory word about anyone, never saw him give less than his best to any task he tackled, and never knew him to pass the buck, or be anything but scrupulously honest and sincere. He was always ready to do what he could to help, to make things easier for the other person.

"Sol was a true professional, so modest and self-effacing that many people he worked with never knew that years ago he had pencilled and written many fine scripts for our books, and had been considered one of our top inkers. He also did coloring, lettering, layout and editing—and whatever he did, he did it well.

"As an executive in charge of a department, Sol had one of the most valuable qualities of all—he was wonderfully dependable. Not only did he do what had to be done skillfully and

cheerfully, but he delivered it as promised.

"As a husband, a father, co-worker and a friend, Sol enriched the lives of those who knew him. Today, we say goodbye to Sol Brodsky—we will remember this gentle, decent man with great love, always."

ANTI-MUTANT MOVEMENT GAINS FORCE IN DAZZLER GRAPHIC NOVEL, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, THE NEW MUTANTS

Public fear of mutants will play an important role in the upcoming Dazzler graphic novel, with effects that will continue to build in the *Beauty And The Beast* limited series and reach into *The New Mutants* and other Marvel titles.

In the graphic novel Roman Nekoboh, Dazzler's co-star/lover, discovers that she is a mutant and reveals it to the world in an effort to spur her career forward. Instead, they are met with an increasing tide of suspicion and fear.

"The renewed anti-mutant sentiment that will rise up in the *Dazzler* graphic novel will ultimately affect every mutant in the Marvel Universe," writer Jim Shooter said.

Frank Springer and Vince Colletta will be the art team for the book, which will be on sale soon.

This wave of prejudice will drive Dazzler underground in the *Beauty And The Beast* four-issue limited-series by Ann Nocenti, Don Perlin and Kim DeMulder, on sale beginning in August.

She will join a group of mutants who don't fall into the "hero" or "villain" classifications. "They're not 'good' or 'evil', just very confused," Nocenti explained. "What they get out of their community is the mutual support, that it is all right to be 'freaks.'"

However, these mutants make their living by providing entertainment for the very rich in the form of gladiatorial games. "People pay $10,000 for a single ticket to the games, and what they are hoping for is to see bloodshed, perhaps even a murder," Ann said.

When the Beast finds Dazzler, she has already been forced underground by public hounding and she has begun to lose control of her powers. She is "leaking" light. The Beast is vacationing in Southern California when he finds her, and falls in love with her.

He goes through incredible adversity so they can be together, even participating in the gladiatorial games. He and Dazzler also have to put up with the public furor their romance causes, and they meet up with someone who claims to be the son of Dr. Doom. "It's definitely an impossible love story," Nocenti comments.

The gladiators will resurface again soon in the *New Mutants* to kidnap members of the team for use in the games, according to writer Chris Claremont. "The games attract a lot of very wealthy people," he noted, "and there is always a need to find new attractions to keep them interesting."

THE RETURN OF THE MONSTER MAGAZINE

New Media Publishing, Inc., publishers of *Comics Feature*, are proud to announce the return of monsters with Forrest J Ackerman's *MONSTERLAND*. Ackerman recently received the first Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award at the San Diego Comics Convention. He's well-known in the horror/sf field as the editor of *Famous Monsters*, the former Warren Publication. *MONSTERLAND* will focus on horror classics as well as the current horror revival—*Ghostbusters* will appear side-by-side with Dr. Phibes. This monster feast will be on the newsstands by December this year.

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Dazzler The Movie, Graphic Novel #10 cover painting by Bill Sienkiewicz. ©Marvel Comics Group Inc.

The Ackermonster, Forrest J Ackerman as seen by Bill Nelson.

 Continued from page 5

TIME	ABC	CBS	NBC
8:30-9 a.m.	*Super Friends: The Legendary Super-powers Show*—Returns to the network after a year's absence with a mix of new and returning favorite episodes. Firestorm joins the crew of DC comics characters this season, as does Darkseid, as the ruler of the intergalactic underworld. Hanna-Barbera.	*Saturday Supercade*—Q'Bert and Donkey Kong return, this season joined by fellow arcade superstars Kangaroo and Space Ace. A Ruby-Spears production.	*The Pink Panther And Sons*—A half-hour animated series featuring sons of the world-famous feline. Produced by the Panther's original creators, DePatie-Freeling, in association with Hanna-Barbera.
9-9:30 a.m.	*The Mighty Orbots*—TMS Entertainment brings us the animated adventures of five futuristic robots with distinctive personalities and powers. When they combine to form one super robot, They are known as Orbot.		*Smurfs*—An hour and a half of 'em! A Sepp International/Hanna-Barbera production.
9:30-10 a.m	*Turbo Teen*—The pervading influence of Knight Rider rears its head in this new animated series about a boy who turns into a sleek, turbo-charged racing car whenever his body temperature rises. His arch-enemy is a big-wheeled, 4 x 4 truck called Darkrider. Hey, I just report on 'em. Ruby-Spears is responsible for making it.	*Dungeons And Dragons*—Our six teenage friends find a buried car that may or may not be their ticket out of the mystical realm in the season's opening episode. Since it's indicated that there are a lot of exciting segments to come, it's probably a safe bet that they don't find their way home too easily. Marvel Productions.	
10-10:30 a.m.,	*Dragon's Lair*—Also from Ruby-Spears. Videogames' most recent hit comes to Saturday morning. Comedy-Adventures with Dirk the Daring as he wends his way into said reptile's sanctum. An important element of this program will be for audiences to guess which routes Dirk will take in his quest.	*Pryor's Place*—Richard Pryor appears LIVE on this Sid and Marty Krofft production, hosting and starring in uplifting little stories for the younger set. The Krofft Puppets will be his regular co-stars, and special guest stars are scheduled for each show.	
10:30-11 a.m.	*Wolf Rock TV*—Live music videos will be mixed with the animated story of a group of teenagers who run a video station. Starring Wolfman Jack as the voice of the station's mysterious announcer. DIC in association with Dick Clark Productions.	*The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Show*—These guys have been around longer than Captain Kangaroo. Featuring the same cartoons we've all seen a million times (and who's complaining?) from the Warner Bros. vaults.	*Alvin And The Chipmunks*—Animated chipmunks and chipettes return to serenade you, thanks to Ruby-Spears Enterprises and Bagdasarian Productions.
11-11:30 a.m.	*New Scooby Doo Mysteries*—Featuring all-new episodes. The dog's fifteenth season. Hanna-Barbera.		*Kidd Video*—A half-hour series about a teenage rock group that discovers an alternate music universe. The group starts the show in live action, going into animation upon entering the rock dimension. Animated videos of Top 40 music will be a regular feature. Produced by Saban Productions in association with DIC Enterprises.
11:30-12 a.m.	*The Littles*—The second season of the trials and tribulations of this loving family of little people who measure one inch to every one foot of normal human's height. New episodes. DIC Enterprises.		*Mr. T*—The highest rated new Saturday morning program of the last ten years returns with more animated adventures of everybody's favorite articulate spokesman for traditional good taste. Watch it, Buckah! Ruby-Spears Enterprises.
12-12:30 p.m.	*ABC Weekend Special*	*The Charlie Brown And Snoopy Show*—In its second season, featuring quick-paced stories taken from many of cartoonist Charles Schulz original Peanuts comics strips. A Lee Mendelson—Bill Melendez Productions in association with Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates and United Features Syndicate.	*Going Bananas*—A half-hour of fun and surprises with a new kind of super hero, Rovana Banana, a real-life orangutan who becomes involved in hilarious live-action hijinks. The series is from Jansen—Merville Productions, in association with Hanna-Barbera.
12:30-1 p.m.	*American Bandstand*		*Spider-Man And His Amazing Friends*—As far as I can tell, these are all going to be rebroadcasts of episodes from previous seasons and the Spider-Man syndicated show. Marvel Productions, of course.

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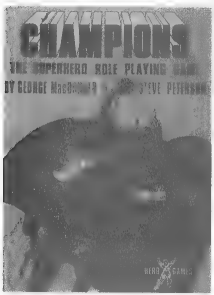
Continued from page 13

volved, the more time it takes.

Thus, the gamemaster should try to slant his scenarios toward the other style of superhero writing. Start the characters in their civilian identities, doing whatever they do when they aren't making the world safe for democracy. If you are not familiar with the heroes involved in the game, examine the character sheets and question the players about the hero's interests and preoccupations. In *Champions* and *Superworld* the



character gets points usable for buying powers if he has problems such as nosy relatives or clinging girlfriends. *Villains and Vigilantes* depends on the role-playing of the players to invent such complications, since they aren't necessary to create the character. Supporting characters should exist, however, no matter what system is used, since this situation is true to the comics which inspire the genre.

Use these supporting characters to involve our heroes in their current crisis. Keep any incidental combat short. If the hero surprises two gangsters trying to kidnap his fiancee, this is not the time for a full-scale battle. The gangsters should either give up or go down quickly. After all, they are trying to kidnap the fiancee because she is not super, and weren't hired for their ability to take on superbeings.

When you get to the climactic battle—make it epic. This doesn't mean you have to have a four-hour punchout to make the game worthwhile, any more than a comic has to consist of 10 pages of lead-in and 12 pages of combat. Make the villains tough, but with weaknesses the heroes can exploit. Fighting four or less heroes with equal numbers is fun and easy to do, but, for your own sanity, do not try to match eight heroes with eight villains. Instead, use villains who are individually tougher than any one hero, but are susceptible to teamwork by the heroes.

Initially, perhaps the most discouraging target for a group of heroes is the massively powerful single villain. Here you can recreate Doctor Doom versus the Fantastic Four, or Magneto versus the X-Men or Godzilla versus the Champions. When their initial attacks just make the villain sneer, the players will find great delight in the final triumph when they use teamwork and perceptions of the villain's weakness to bring him down.

ELFTALK: OR HOW I LEARNED TO RIDE A WOLF WITH TEN-SIDED DICE

And now for something completely different.

Many of you may be aware that Chaosium recently released the Elfquest role-playing game. It occurs to me that you may have some interest in how our relatively small, but reputable, company got the contract to do the game and what I went through to get the game out.

In June, 1982, Greg Stafford, the president and founder of Chaosium, Inc., came back from one of the major game conventions with a stack of *ElfQuest* comics. It seems he had run into Richard Pini at Origins, and Richard said they were looking for a company to do a role-playing game based on the series....

I had bought the first six issues of *ElfQuest* at my favorite comics shop in early 1980. I had immediately identified with the elves lost in a world they never made and enjoyed wondering what Wendy and Richard were going to drop on us next. However, until Greg brought those issues back from Origins, I was simply a fan.

Greg wanted to know what I thought of the idea of doing a game. My response was mature, calm and reasoned. I said "Do it!" and drooled a lot.

Within about six months, the contract was signed for Chaosium to do the game. Richard admitted that part of their reason for picking Chaosium was the role-players among their fans who kept recommending us. I modestly acknowledged that they had some reason for their recommendations—and silently blessed the fans' perceptive souls. Thank you again, out there, who had faith in us and me in particular, to get the job done.

Writing the game was both simpler and harder than it seemed. It was simple because the world of *Elfquest* leant itself to the same game mechanics I had used in our flagship game, *RuneQuest*. It was harder because at that time we were just starting to revise *RuneQuest* for its third edition, which would be published by industry giant Avalon Hill. This meant that I had to rewrite the game system for *RuneQuest* before I could write *Elfquest*.

Once I had the *RuneQuest* system written for the new edition, I used the magic of word processing to transfer the material over to *Elfquest*. Word processing is a wonderful thing. I don't have to rewrite the same paragraph over and over again, I just copy the paragraph onto a new diskette and change a few key words—"elf" instead of "man" and "Elfquest" instead of "RuneQuest". Simple, huh?

Wrong. My eagle-eyed playtesters rapidly discovered that a human-eye view of the world is different from an elf-eye view. What worked just fine for a complex general fantasy game did not explain how the World of Two Moons worked to an Elfquest fan who would be coming into gaming for the first time.

Oh well, back to the old keyboard.

In all, the game underwent over six months of playtesting. The Wolfriders of Wolfhaven Holt encountered hostile

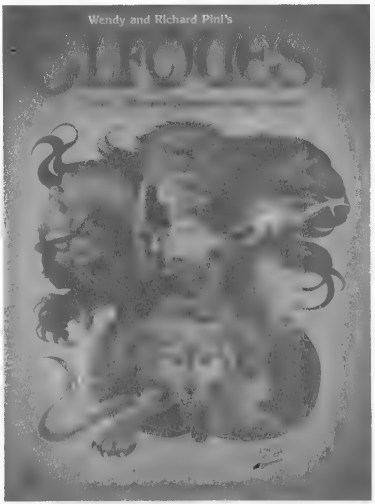
humans, fought Madcoll, explored new lands for the holt, met Plainsrunner elves, hunted No-Humps, met the Lord of the Spiders, rescued a young Plainsrunner girl from sadistic humans and uncovered a bizarre human-troll trading scheme. Meanwhile—out of town playtesters in Hayward, California; Ilion, New York; Memphis, Tennessee; and Quebec all checked over the copies of the ever-changing rules I sent them and played their own games, sending me their own playtesting results. Kenneth Brown of Ilion even sent me the scenario which became the first one in the Worldbook. Like the work of my own playtesters, their reactions and criticisms were invaluable.

The most frustrating thing about working on the game, of course, was the same enjoyable frustration everyone who reads the comics feels —I couldn't find out what was coming. Richard and Wendy keep a tight rein on the *Elfquest* plotline. At this writing I still don't know what will be in #20, and I didn't know what was in #19 until it came out. This can be very frustrating for a game writer who is trying to picture the world of the game in as complete terms as possible.

It took major browbeating to get an assurance that *all* the elves would not climb into the palace and go back where they came from. This doesn't say that some of them won't. One paragraph on the hypothetical desert people had to be altered at the last minute when we saw issue #18. I leave which paragraph it was up to the keen eyes of those who possess the game. It isn't very hard to figure out.

Last any gentle reader get the wrong idea of our working relationship, however, Wendy and Richard were extremely cooperative. They bent over backward to accomodate the game design, aside from being closemouthed about their story. Only once did they request a deletion of a game rule.

For those who are wondering what the magical power of Tapping is that Gliders are supposed to have but doesn't appear in the magical power listing, it is an ability to tap the magic points and POW of another



cooperating elf to help do magic. Richard felt that this wasn't something that the elves had been pictured doing, and they might not be able to do it. In effect, he reserved judgement on it and asked that it not be described until the upcoming *Elfquest Companion*, if then. If this power suddenly appears in issue #20, remember that you read it here first.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Fantasy Games Unlimited, P. O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576

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BIO: Steve Perrin helped get comics fandom going when he ordered the first issue of Jerry Bails' *Alter-Ego*. After a flurry of fan publishing activity in the early '60s he dropped out of publishing to concentrate on his marriage to Luise, his founding membership in the Society for Creative Anachronism and his growing interest in wargames. However, he kept reading comics. Now Steve designs games for Chaosium Inc. and is the author of *Superworld*, a role-playing game for comic book superheroes and the official *Elfquest* role-playing game.

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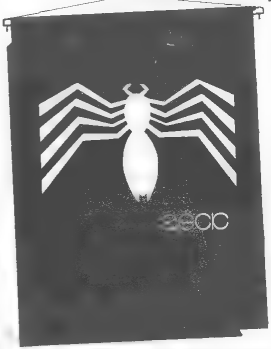

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worthy of the time of serious students of comic strips and, more importantly, of those of us who simply like to *read* comics at their best... which is what "Mr. Oswald" is.

The artwork—and the humor—brings to mind such greats as H.T. Webster and Jimmy Hatlo. There is a similarity in the style of humor, as well. J.R. Williams also comes to mind—yet Johnson's work doesn't resemble the work of anybody but Johnson. Echoes of contemporaries Billy DeBeck and Carl Ed (with whom Johnson studied at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts) can be seen. Certainly, the work of underground cartoonists like R. Crumb and Jay Lynch (among others who strive for an "old-timey" feel to their work) comes to mind.

But "Mr. Oswald" is a unique experience, one any true fan of the comics will savor. Its depiction of small-town life is second only to "Gasoline Alley", and the scope of its achievement is that classic strip's equal. Its humor is as fresh as "Hagar" or "Beetle Bailey" at their best, but with a day-to-day reality those strips never approach. Few cartoonists have combined slapstick and "real life" to such great effect—perhaps Chic Young (and company) might be cited, with "Blondie", as a point of comparison; but Dagwood and Blondie lack Mr. Oswald's quiet humanity.

Few collections of comic strips can compare with *40 Years With Mr. Oswald*, which tells of Oswald's experiences from the opening of his store in the 1920s through the depression years, World War II, Korea, the post-war boom, all the way to his 40th anniversary sale in 1967. The book is broken down into chapters with large one-panel gag illustrations and charming introductions by Johnson that are in effect the artist's autobiography, told in terms of how his life was mirrored by Mr. Oswald's.

40 Years With Mr. Oswald is a rambling, episodic novel of small-town America, evoking nostalgic memories for those who lived that life, and a sense of something missed for those who

NO-MR. OSWALD SAYS YOU'RE ALWAYS RIGHT AND THAT SETTLES IT-
HA! HA! IN THAT CASE WE ARE RIGHT WHEN WE SAY WE WERE WRONG A WHILE AGO
ANYWAY, WE'LL TAKE THE CARVING SET-

YOU COULDN'T BE RIGHT AND WRONG AT THE SAME TIME ON THE SAME SUBJICK-
WELL, IF WE WERE WRONG A WHILE AGO WE'RE RIGHT NOW AND IF WE WERE RIGHT A WHILE AGO WE'RE WRONG NOW-
THAT'S AS PLAIN AS YOUR BIG CHIN!

didn't. Johnson, were he more widely known, might well be regarded as the Norman Rockwell of the comics.

When I first brought "Mr. Oswald" and Russell Johnson to the attention of comics fandom four years ago, in the pages of Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*, response to the samples of the strip printed there was favorable and immediate. A number of nationally-famed cartoonists embraced the strip, notably Mort Walker. Bill Blackbeard wrote me bemoaning the fact that had he known of this fine strip's existence, he'd have run an example of "Mr. Oswald" in his prestigious *Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics*. Russell Johnson was swamped with orders for *40 Years With Mr. Oswald* and had to obtain another supply of books from the publisher (a supply that is ever dwindling, incidentally). *The Comics Journal* ran a major piece on "Mr. Oswald" and Johnson in August 1983.

In February of 1984, Johnson was not only still at work on "Mr. Oswald", he was developing a strip about the elderly for submission to the newspaper syndicates. I have seen samples of the strip, "Grandpa Jake", and it's as charming and well-observed as "Mr. Oswald". Johnson does admit, however, that the syndicates may be hesitant to sign up a 90 year-old cartoonist....

Nevertheless, "Mr. Oswald" continues on, and Johnson has groomed a successor (Larry Day) who will also help on "Grandpa Jake", should some syndicate be wise enough to purchase it.

Continued from page 16

and at least one of *DPS'* characters showed up in the premiere issue of *Keen Detective*. Another small mystery about the magazine is how it managed to get by with only 48 pages in a time when just about every other competitor was offering a fat 64. In an admirable display of chutzpah, when Centaur finally did up their page content to what everybody else already had, they boasted on the cover, "16 more pages!"

Like the other early Centaur titles, *Keen Detective* had a fluctuating cast of characters. Heroes came and went and if you took a liking to a particular detective or adventurer you might never see him again after a couple episodes. The make up of each issue seemed to depend on what Jacquet could cajole out of his contributors plus what came in over the transom. During the relatively short life the magazine found room in its pages for quite a range of detective stories, everything from hardboiled dicks to masked mysterymen. There were even yarns that issued, in Ellery Queen fashion, a challenge to the reader to solve the mystery before the detective.

The magazine's first detective star was already a newsstand veteran when he showed up in its pages. The Clock had appeared simultaneously in the November, 1936 issues of both *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories*. The following month he was also to be found holding forth in *Detective Picture Stories* and late in 1937 he switched venue in time to slip into the third issue of *Feature Funnies*. The two cases that ran in *Keen Detective Funnies* are apparently reprints.

The Clock was a natty fellow, doing his detecting in tuxedo and grey fedora. He covered his face with a black silken mask and, early on, also carried a goldheaded cane. George E. Brenner, who wrote and drew the feature, was quite probably influenced by the Saint as well as such dapper pulp crime fighters as the Phantom Detective, who was depicted on covers in tophat, tails and mask. Just as the Saint left behind his card with a haloed stick figure, the Clock left a card with a depiction of a time piece and the slogan *The Clock Has Struck*. Clearly he had dubbed himself the Clock originally solely for the sake of this pun.

Among the other sleuths were Thurston Hunt, Terry Taylor and Rocky Baird. Rocky was the creation of Paul Lauretta, a young fellow much under the spell of Roy Crane, and his adventures were in the Captain Easy rather than the Sherlock Holmes vein. Graduating from swipes, Lauretta developed an effective Crane-inspired style of his own and it looks as though he had a hand in some of the early Superman stories.

In the sixth issue a scientific detective joined the line up. Dean Denton had a profile that instantly told you he was in the same league as such newspaper detectives as Dick Tracy and Dan Dunn. One of the most interesting things about him was the fact he had been "radio's highest paid ventriloquist" before switching to his new career. "Now, with his assistant, Carol, and his valet, Absalom, he devotes himself to the task of helping humanity through science." The strip was written by Harry Francis Campbell, who packaged features for various publishers, and drawn by a youthful Tex Blaisdell. It was one of the few detective strips to use footnotes, which most often explains some scientific concept or technical term ("Editor's Note. Bends, the bane of divers, is caused by nitrogen forced into the blood by the pressure..."). A great many of Denton's cases involved him with a red robed master criminal known as the Conqueror. In the episode entitled "The Ruse Of The Remarkable Ray" Denton and his crew take in the sights of the San Francisco fair, including Sally Rand's Nude Ranch. In only one of the cases I've read does Denton actually use his fabled voice throwing ability to help him in his fight against crime.

Detective characters continued to check in and check out of the magazine. There was stony Dawson, TNT Todd of the FBI and Little Dynamite. This latter was the first adventure feature by Jack Cole to see print. Ben Trumpson, better known as Little Dynamite, is a diminutive cop. In his only case, which ran in the February, 1939 issue, he rounds up a gang of ruthless car thieves. Being a half-pint, Ben is able to hide in the trunk of a car that is snatched by the crooks. This six page story is one Cole obviously worked hard on and the panels are rich with shading, crosshatching and other time consuming noodling. His inking is thicklined and cautious. Though his figure work and some of his perspective is shaky, he is already making use of odd-angle shots and dramatic closeups.

Ken Ernst, in the days before he went into the 'soap business with Mary Worth, contributed Gabby Flynn. A tough, fast-talking newspaperman, Gabby made five appearances in the magazine. The formidable Will Eisner was represented in the tenth issue by a hardboiled cop named Donovan. Titled

"Muss 'Em Up", the story was rich with tilted panels, movie angles and dark shadows. It was a reprint from *Funny Pages*.

Keen Detective gave a home as well to a trenchcoated investigator called the Mastermind. His creator, George Merkle, always stopped the narrative at the top of the final page to throw down the gauntlet to his readers. "How good a detective are you? Before reading this solution, see if you can deduct who is guilty of the three suspects. All clews were shown."

A detective with one foot in the costumed hero camp was the Masked Marvel, who came along in the eleventh issue. Billed as a Super Sleuth, he did his criminal investigation work clad in red shirt, red riding breeches and a red domino mask. He took, as explained in a caption, a catholic view of his work. "The Masked Marvel continues his war on crime, speeding to any part of the world where his help is needed in catching criminals. His great scientific skill, inventions and psychic powers are ever ready to be thrown into the battle against evil forces. No request for his aid is too great or too small to be ignored." The Marvel was aided by three confederates called ZR, ZY and ZL, who wore civilian clothes and green masks. When ZL, one of the few baldheaded heroes in comics, was mortally wounded, the Masked Marvel vowed, "We will have to continue without ZL, who has given his life in our great fight to rid this country of crime... we will carry on with renewed vigor!" Drawn by Ben Thompson, MM had a featured spot in the magazine and soloed on several covers.

Without a doubt the strangest detective to grace the pages of *KDF* was the star of a strip entitled "The Eye Sees". Not only didn't he have a civilian identity, he didn't even have a body. Living up to his name, he was nothing else but an eye. Albeit an enormous, impressive one with the ability to fly and hover. When the Eye looked at you, you paid attention. He first floated into view in the sixteenth issue (December, 1939), the invention of the versatile

Frank Thomas. During his comic book career Thomas drew both adventure heroes like the Owl and stuff like Billy and Bonnie Bee in *New Funnies*. "The Eye Sees", one of his more or less straight efforts, featured a disembodied orb who was dedicated to helping the oppressed and punishing evildoers. "I AM THE EYE!" he explained in his maiden venture. "The Eye! To whom time and distance are nothing—who bares man's thoughts and pierces his conscience! The Eye's powers are limitless—his vengeance terrible!" He was able to materialize just about any place, high in the sky to strike an escaping villain's airship with a bolt of fire out of his pupil or in a cemetery at midnight to discourage graverobbers. He could expand and shrink and, besides sending bolts of fire and power rays, was also capable of projecting a searchlight beam. The Eye was a vindictive fellow and his notion of justice included killing off the bad guys. He was fond of addressing his victims with lines like, "I enjoy seeing the look in the eyes of scoundrels like you when death stands before you!" In light of that, it was a bit unsettling to have him say to you in the last panel of an issue, "Unless we meet in real life, fellows and girls, the Eye bids you farewell until next month!" The Eye managed, by the way, not to be bothered by the fact he didn't have a mouth.

Just before folding its tents *Keen Detective* introduced a sort of superhero detective. Drake Stevens was the son of a famous ornithologist murdered at sea by modern day pirates. A crackerjack scientist, young Drake fixes himself up with a set of gas-filled albatross wings and a backpack jet and "as Air Man brings the power of mythology, the wonders of science and the might of his body to wreak vengeance on the powers of evil at sea". The creation of writer George Kapitan and artist Harry Sahle (who was ghosting The Human Torch at about the same time), Air Man had a very short career. He appeared in the final two issues of the magazine and then it went out of business. Back then funny book crooks weren't as used to encountering flying heroes and when Air Man swooped down to interrupt their villainy on the high seas, they'd exclaim, "Who's dis guy dressed like a bird?"

Keen Detective Funnies breathed its last with #24 (September 1940). Among those aboard for the final issue were Air Man, the Masked Marvel, Dean Denton and the Eye. The story that closed the issue featured Dan Dennis, another tough FBI man, and in its last panel it urged readers, "Don't miss the next issue!"

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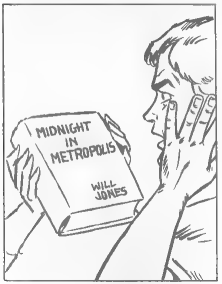

generators, both powered by quintile crystals, were housed. Brainiac 5 explained, "The walls of the Legion clubhouse are reinforced thyno-plastic, lined with maganium inertron, the most durable of all cosmic alloys, and can withstand the most powerful of attacks."

Brainiac 5, with his 12th level mind, was as intelligent as I'd always heard. Sadly, too much brain can make you boring. I turned my attention to the girls. Suddenly I realized that there were five, not three girls surrounding me. Three of them were physically identical; for a moment I thought they must be clones, realizing that that science could have been perfected by the 30th century. Then I remembered Triplicate Girl's amazing ability to split herself into three identical bodies.

A FEW GIRLS TOO MANY

All three of her bodies were smiling at me provocatively. The mathematical possibilities made me dizzy.

Abruptly, Bouncing Boy, with his unnaturally bloated body, launched into a series of funny bouncing tricks such as no twentieth century acrobat could have imagined possible. He cried out, "Look at me, Triplicate Girl! Look at me!"

Triplicate Girl studiously ignored him.

"I'd like to learn more about the Legion," I said to one of the three triplicates. "Why don't we go to the Monitor Room where the progress of other Legionnaires, such as Matter-Eater Lad, Colossal Boy and Shrinking Violet, can be followed in their various missions on color screens?"

But all three triplicates countered my request with, "But we want to hear about you!"

"Me?" I said.

Almost simultaneously, they fired questions at me:

"Where do you get your ideas?"

"Since all your books are set in the twentieth century, does that mean you write from life?"

"Do you have to suffer to be an author?"

"Well, hardship does help the author hone his vision," I said.

All the girls sighed and looked at me with big limpid eyes.

"Super-heroes have hardships too," said Bouncing Boy, churlishly. "Triplicate Girl, remember the time I single-handedly defeated the piranha-birds of Alabaster VI? Or the time I saved the people of Dipthong II from a horde of two-legged spider-beasts? Or the time I used my remarkable super-bouncing ability to repel an invasion of Ganymedean brain-suckers?"

"How did it feel when you won your first Pulitzer?"

"Why do most authors commit suicide?"

"Is it true that authors drink and smoke a lot?"

"Well," I answered, "drinking and smoking do help the author hone his vision."

Despite Bouncing Boy's mounting jealousy, the Triplicate Girls crowded around me. I found myself contemplating acts I had never thought possible before. But then I remembered. According to the comics, Triplicate Girl will eventually lose one of her selves to a berserk computer, become Duo Damsel, and marry Bouncing Boy. But then again, I had my information second-hand from a thousand years in the future. Besides, I wouldn't trust comic book writers to be the most accurate future historians around.

Princess Projectra joined the fray. "As a super-powered imparter of illusions myself, I was amazed by the illusion of reality you cast in your book without any super-powers at all."

"Oh really?" I said. "You'll have to let me read that book before I return to my own time."

"Of course," Triplicate Girl chimed in chorus, "but first let me take you to a room where I can show you some... er... very interesting equipment."

She took my hands to lead me away, but suddenly a fourth triplicate appeared before us. Upon closer inspection, however, I saw that this quadruplicate was not identical to the others. Where the others were wholesomely lovely, this apparition looked like a hag: Her hair was mussed, her face was covered with acne, and runs marred her stockings.

"Stop it, Princess Projectra!" snarled Triplicate Girl, her faces distorted with rage.

I glanced over my shoulder at Princess Projectra, and the sight I saw stopped me in my tracks. Her cape had fallen from her shoulders and her bodysuit had become totally transparent.

Suddenly a voice seemed to fill my head. With a rush of embarrassment, I realized that I had failed to shield my thoughts from Saturn Girl.

"The minx isn't nearly that beautiful, Will," she telepathed. "She's merely using her remarkable power of illusion to outshine Triplicate Girl and myself. Just keep in mind, Will, that when you looked at me, what you see is what you get—as Negroes used to say before their extinction in the twenty-second century."

"That's not fair, Saturn Girl!" bristled Princess Projectra. "I know you're thinking to Will! You're trying to get the Bard all to yourself!"

The girls went at it tooth and nail, scrapping over me. I couldn't believe how quickly the life-long friends of the Legion would turn hatefully on each other over such a petty matter. I thought the least I could do was pick one right away and end their dispute.

I'll admit I was disgusted at first to realize that the collapse of sexual morals that began in the 1960s had, by

the thirtieth century, undermined the ethics even of super-heroines. But, I told myself, when in the future, do as the futurians do.

30TH CENTURY DATING

The problem was, whom should I pick? Saturn Girl, the beauteous telepath from the ringed planet, who could discern my every whim and act immediately to gratify it? Or Princess Projectra, whose amazing illusions could make any fantasy appear before my eyes? But in the last analysis, what healthy man could resist the opportunities presented by Triplicate Girl?

Even though Triplicate Girl and Princess Projectra lacked the telepathic powers of their fellow Legionnaires, I got the feeling that they knew what was running through my mind. Tension cracked in the air. Brainiac 5, with his 12th level mind, must have sensed it too, because he suddenly said, "Mr. Jones, would you like to visit the room in which is housed the Miracle Machine, which can grant any wish, no matter how subliminal, even if one were to wish unconsciously, for example, for the end of the universe, and is thus the most dangerous device in existence?"

"Oh, no thanks," I said. "I think I'll take the Triplicate Girls up on their earlier offer."

I led the triplicates from the room, leaving Saturn Girl and Princess Projectra pouting in disappointment, Brainiac 5 indignant and Bouncing Boy bouncing off the equipment in jealous rage.

In her living quarters, Triplicate Girl sat me down on her bed.

"Where's that interesting equipment you wanted to show me, Triplicate Girl?" I asked playfully.

She breathed huskily, "Call me Luornu, Will."

"Kiss me, Luornu."

One of the triplicates kissed me hotly while the other two snuggled up to me on the bed. Maybe you're like me, and you've always wondered if the female Legionnaires' breasts are really as big and firm as the comic book artists portray them, or if it's only an effect of their thirtieth century magnalum inertron bras. I, Will Jones, was about to find out.

But my hand was still working on her bra-strap when she slapped it away.

"Please, Bard," she said. "It's only our first date."

"Are you kidding me?" I said. "In my time, when girls come on this strong, they mean business."

"Gee, Will, I just wanted you to like me."

THE TRUTH: WILL'S OUT

Just then, the spheroid form of Bouncing Boy rolled into the room. "All right, Triplicate Girl! Don't you think we're taking this a little too far? Just because we agreed to Superman's scheme to deceive Will into thinking that his books survived for a thousand years, doesn't mean you have to throw yourselves all over him! We're supposed to be reinforcing his literary ambitions, not his twisted sexual fantasies!"

"Who are you to talk, you tub of lard?" snapped Triplicate Girl. "How many times have you asked all of me to...".

But I interrupted her. "Is this true?" I stammered. "Has my pal Superman deceived me?"

The other Legionnaires had crowded in behind Bouncing Boy, but none seemed to have the nerve to speak. At last Saturn Girl telepathed to me, "I'm afraid it's true, Will. Earlier, when Superman said he was flying to the future to visit the adult Legion, in fact he flew to the past to warn us of your coming and outline his plan to boost your confidence. We used the Miracle Machine to fabricate book covers with your name on them and slap them on several copies of one of the classics in our library. Don't hold it against us, Will. We only did it to make you feel good. We didn't anticipate that all of us girls would find you so desirable, especially considering the fact that I'm engaged to Lightning Lad, Princess Projectra is in love with Karate Kid and Triplicate Girl has been dating Bouncing Boy."

THE NEWEST LEGIONNAIRE

I was crushed. The other Legionnaires stared at their feet, saying nothing. Moments later, when Brainiac 5 began to speak, I realized that they had been conferring telepathically, linked by Saturn Girl's power.

"Despite this little hoax, Bar... er... Mr. Jones... and despite the fact that we were unable to find any of your works in the libraries of the eighty-two planets which we scanned before you arrived here... we know you really are a good writer, because we've monitored your stories on our time-screens. In fact, we all agree that your literary prowess is so impressive as to constitute a super-power. Since this power with words is duplicated by no other Legionnaire and so does not violate our charter, we have elected you an honorary member of the Legion of Super-Heroes, along with Insect Queen, Elastic Lad and Superman's boyhood pal, Ross Peters. I hereby christen you Literary Lad."

"Gee, thanks," I said, somewhat heartened.

Just then, Superman returned from his bogus mission into the future. I could tell from his averted glance that Saturn Girl had already informed him of the situation telepathically.

"Well, Will, I guess we should go home," he said quietly.

"We're really sorry, Will," said Bouncing Boy remorsefully as Superman wrapped me in his cape.

"That's okay," I said. "I'll get over it."

We flew along the time-stream in silence. Superman dropped me off at my apartment, mumbled an embarrassed good-bye and disappeared into the sky. Only then did I pull from under my coat the book I had swiped from the future. I allowed myself one last look at my name on the cover. Then I opened it and read the first line: "Sing, O Goddess, the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus, who brought countless ills upon the Achaeans...".

EDITORIAL

By Hal Schuster

Sometimes a format binds a book. Sometimes a name can even cause a book to head in a particular direction —even if that is not the most healthy way for the book to go. Recently I was talking to Bob Martin, the very talented editor of one of the Starlog Publishing Group's books. He was originally hired to edit a film mag by the name of *Fantastica*. But *Fantastic Films* quite understandably feared confusion with their own title and insisted that the name be changed. The result was that by the time Bob started work he edited *Fangoria* and not the book he was hired for. It is evident that the first few issues of the title were different than what followed and certainly the title change played a part in that.

Other examples are recent changes in comic books. *Marvel Two-In-One* was a comic that felt obligated to pair the Thing with someone every issue and the book flopped. *The Thing* is free to run the type of stories that it wants with no restrictions. *The Brave and The Bold*, over at DC, had run pairings of characters ever since its fiftieth issue in which Green Arrow teamed with the Martian Manhunter. And it remained frozen that way ever since, restricting even more when it became mandatory to have Batman as one of the pairing. This title was replaced by a complete team, but one of regular protagonists headed by Batman, *The Outsiders*. Most recently Marvel has ended the run of *Marvel Team-Up*, a Spider-Man plus title, to replace it with *The Web of Spider-Man*. Speculation aside on whether this, when joining *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*, simply makes for too many spiders. In any case, as with the other changes, it opens up greater possibilities.

Rest assured that we interpret *Comics Feature* broadly enough not to type ourselves into a similar corner. We regard our purpose as complete coverage of the graphic arts and of everything that might entail from underground comic books to Disney, to comic strips to the comic books of the distant past, the recent past and of the future. Games based on comic books, electronic toys and computer games, art portfolios and drawing techniques, and just about anything else that comes our way be it in print, digital bits, film or animation cells will eventually find its way into our pages. This issue we welcome Steve Perrin, the developer of both the *Elfquest* game and the *Superworld* game, to our pages as a regular columnist. Next issue we hope to introduce Bob Sodaro, managing editor of *Ahoy!*, the computer magazine. We are also beginning with this issue excerpts from the upcoming history of modern comics being produced by Jacobs and Jones. This issue we touch on some of the more interesting aspects of early Marvel Comics. Next issue and for several issues after that we will continue on the highlights of the Sixties. Of course, Jacobs and Jones rather unique parody series will also continue to make an appearance.

We will be dropping the Consumer Guide until further notice to make room for the new features. If anyone really cares about this series, please drop us a note immediately as the decision is by no means irrevocable.

Also do let us know how you think we are doing. Sales are fine but that doesn't always tell the whole story. How do you feel about our many columns. Do you look forward to the latest erudite words from Goulart, Collins, Bissette, Van Hise and crew or do some of them simply leave you cold? Which are which? Or do you like the whole mix? We aim to be responsive to your interests but we must know them first. And it is quite hard to run a letters column without letters.

Well, it's time to proceed into the book and onto our feature piece on the future of America's second largest comic book company. Let Dick Giordano fill you in on all of the changes and on the path he has chosen to take his company. If should be exciting. Plus, of course, the columns and other features. Enjoy!

SILVER AGE

PART 1

THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS

THE GROWTH OF MARVEL

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST SUPER-HEROES!
CAN THE COMBINED POWER OF THE AVENGERS DEFEAT THE SINISTER SPELLS OF LOKI, GOD OF EVIL?
LOKI!! PREPARE FOR BATTLE!
THE AVENGERS... BAH! I'LL DESTROY YOU ALL!

By Jacobs and Jones

With the success of the Fantastic Four, Stan Lee kicked his comics line into full gear in 1962. Launching eleven new series in the next two-and-a-half years, he might at first have appeared to be merely cranking them out just to fill pages or capitalize on the growing market for superheroes. But Lee had a very clear idea of the type of innovative hero he wanted to create, and nearly all of his new strips fit the bill. It was only in the beginning that his work seemed aimless, for his radical ideas were as yet very general. It took him some months to hit upon the specific elements that would make each series purposeful and consistent.

The Hulk had displayed many uncertainties from the beginning, with sudden changes in the character's psyche and his relationships with both Rick Jones and his own powers. And the same month that Spider-Man first appeared in *Amazing Fantasy*, Lee and Kirby launched their third title, which quickly fell victim to the same problem.

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THOR
THE MIGHTY!
and "THE STONE MEN from SATURN!"
THE LEGEND HAS GROWN UP THAT WHENEVER THOR HURLS HIS MIGHTY HAMMER FROM EARTH, SOON IT ALWAYS RETURNS! AND THUS THE MIGHTY THOR, INVINCIBLE! I AM THOR!!!
OUR STORY OPENS ON THE WINDY COAST OF NORWAY, WHERE WE SEE A REAL FIGHTER, SCARLET O'NEIL, AGAINST THE BLEAK SKY! HE IS DR. DON BLAKE, AN AMERICAN VACATIONING IN EUROPE!
AND, AS DOCTOR BLAKE TURNS AND LEAVES THE SCENE, HE DOESN'T SEE THE STRANGE ALIEN SPACE SHIP WHICH SILENTLY LANDS BEHIND HIM!

THE LEGEND ALSO SAYS THAT WHENEVER THOR HURLS HIS MIGHTY HAMMER FROM EARTH, ...IT ALWAYS RETURNS!
AND SO, INDEED, THE MIGHTY THOR, INVINCIBLE!
NOTHING CAN RESIST IT!
CRACK!
NOTHING!!
HIS BLOOD MINGLING WITH DOCTOR BLAKE'S, THE MIGHTY THOR CONTINUES TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE MYSTIC WEAPON...
BY STRIKING THE HANDLE TWICE ON THE GROUND
I CAN CREATE SNOW OR RAIN OR SUNSHINE!
WHICH SOON GROWS INTO A RAGING TORNADO! ALL THE POWER OF THE STORM IS THOR'S TO COMMAND!
THUMP THUMP
BOOM

© Marvel Comics Group

He who holds the hammer of Thor , physician Don Blake is transformed into the Norse god of Thunder and discovers power beyond his wildest dreams

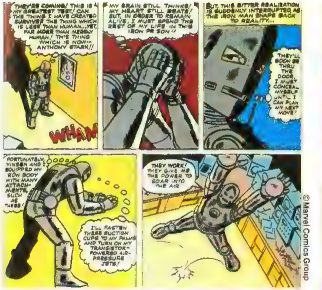
This was the Mighty Thor, and in himself he was a strange combination of elements. When lame physician Don Blake finds a mysterious stone hammer, he is transformed bodily into the Norse god of thunder, complete with massive muscles, long golden locks, a winged Viking helmet and period costume. He discovers that he can fly by hurling the hammer with all his great might and letting it pull him through the air by the wrist-strap. Soon it emerges that the hammer also lets him control the weather and gives him contact with Almighty Odin, father of the gods. With a tap of the hammer Thor can transform himself back into puny Don Blake, the hammer itself becoming a humble cane. When Thor and his weapon are parted for more than a minute, the transformation occurs unwillingly.

THOR, ANT-MAN AND THE TORCH

The notion of a Norse god as a comic book hero was certainly an original one, but Lee seemed to have trouble deciding what to do with it. In his first adventure Thor battled the Stone-Men from Saturn (*Journey Into Mystery* #83, August 1962) in a rather standard Lee-Kirby plot, while in the second he thwarted a communist dictator in the Republic of San Diablo (JIM 84, September 1962). Next Thor met Loki, the legendary trickster among the gods, which promised a more appropriate mythological tone to the series and gave it its best story to date (JIM 85, October 1962). But only two issues later we find a story called "Prisoner of the Reds", in which the elemental deity tumbles back into the humdrum routine of early Marvel plots (JIM 87, December 1962). Although occasionally battling Loki and a futuristic thief called Tomorrow Man (who hearkened back to Kirby's old *Challengers* work), Thor generally stumbled through highly inappropriate adventures for his first year-and-a-half.

Lee himself appeared to lose interest in the project, throwing the writing chores to his brother and jack-of-all-trades, Larry Lieber. Lieber occasionally took on the pencilling chores as well, for Kirby did not seem much more committed to the project than Lee. The result was a haphazard and directionless comic but, with the good fortune falling on Marvel during those hero-hungry years, it sold well enough to survive. Until Lee and Kirby buckled down in early 1964 to see what they could really do with a hero who was also a god, Thor would have to be content with mere survival.

Taking his cue from Thor, who appeared in a failing monster comic called *Journey Into Mystery*, Lee created two more series in quick succession: *Ant-Man*, to salvage *Tales To Astonish* (TA 35, September 1962) and *The Human Torch*, in solo adventures, for *Strange Tales* (ST 101, October 1962). These two titles were the only two to fall below Lee's own standards for originality. The price they paid for this hasty production was a lack of direction and artistic commitment. Ant-Man, a scientist who shrinks and uses insects to fight crime, was apparently doubly inspired


THEY'RE COMING! THIS IS MY SMART SUIT, CAN THINK FOR ITSELF! IT'S PROGRAMMED TO LIKE ME! I'M MORE THAN MERELY MAN AND MACHINE! I'M SOMETHING MORE! I'M ANTHONY STARK!!
WHAM!
BUT MY BRAIN STILL THINKS! MY HEART STILL BEATS! BUT, IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, I MUST LIVE FOREVER INSIDE OF MY SUIT OF IRON! I'M IRON MAN SUPREME!
BUT THIS BITTER REALIZATION IS SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED AS IRON MAN SHOOTS BACK TO EARTH!
THEY'VE BOOBY-TRAPPED THIS DOOR! I MUST CONCEAL MYSELF SO I CAN PLAN MY NEXT MOVE!
FORTUNATELY, THE HINGES ARE ON THIS SIDE! SO I'LL JUST BOOBY-TRAP THE DOOR MYSELF! THAT WAY, ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO ENTER WILL BE TRAPPED!
I'LL FASTEN THIS CABLE TO OUR RULER AND TURN ON MY TRANSISTOR-POWERED RADIO-CONTROL SETS!
THEY WON'T THINK OF LOOKING IN THE AIR!
I'LL WAIT UNTIL THEY'RE ALL INSIDE! THEN I'LL SEAL THEM IN FOREVER!
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The blessing of life, the curse of living... Tony Stark must forever wear the armor of Iron Man to keep his injured heart beating. While Ant-Men takes the Wasp as his partner and must struggle to keep their emotions in check.

THIS IS IT, JANET! THAT WHERE, DON THIS BELT! THE CYLINDERS CON-YOUR HUSBAND KILLED TAIN POWERFUL ANTI-YOUR FATHER'S DEATH RAY! GRAVITY GASSES PROBE MACHINE BROUGHT THAT UNEARTHLY MISSILE DOWN TO OUR PLANET!
I SEE
THE MIRACULOUS VAPOR ENGULFS THEM AND THEY SHRINK... SMALLER... SMALLER... SMALLER
OH... IT FEELS SO... SO WEIRD!
YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, JANET!
AND AS THE SHRINKS TO MINUTE-NESS, GOSSAMER, DAINTY WINGS SPROUT FROM JANET'S SHOULDERS AND TINY, DELICATE ANTENNAE ADORN HER HEAD! SHE HAS TRULY BECOME THE WASP!
THE VOICES OF THE INSECT WORLD AS I HEAR THEM THROUGH MY CYBERNETIC HELMET! I'LL TRANSLATE SO YOU WILL TRY TO UNDERSTAND YOUR WINGS!
SHOT INTO SPACE BY H.E.A.T.-PAK, ANT-MAN FINDS HIS COMPANION CLOSE BEFORE HIM AS HE, TOO, IS SWIFTLY THROUGH THE AIR!
TO HIS GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE I'VE ORDERED THE ANTS TO GATHER THERE!
THE S.S. ENABLEMENT, WHEREVER ARE WE GOING?
ANT-MAN... I THINK YOU'RE WONDERFUL! I WANT YOU TO KNOW, IN CASE THIS CREATURE KILLS US, AS IT DID MY FATHER, I—I'M FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU!
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by an earlier science fiction comic and by DC's Atom. It was an intriguing combination of elements, but Lee put no effort into the project, giving the writing almost immediately to his brother. Kirby only stayed for six issues before Marvel staffer Don Heck began hasty fill-in work. A flirtatious female sidekick called the Wasp didn't help much (TA 44, June 1963), nor did the conversion of the hero into the very different Giant-Man (TA 49, November 1963). At any size, this was the least of Marvel's successes.

The Human Torch (joined by the Thing with ST 125, October 1964) received even less attention from its creator: Leiber wrote it and Dick Ayers, who was most prominent as an inker, drew it from the beginning. The stories consisted of colorless battles with such one-dimensional foes as Plant-Man, the Beetle and Paste-Pot Pete. The series survived only on the strength of the Fantastic Four's success.

THE TRAGIC FLAW

By 1963 Lee finally found the formula that would insure that all his heroes possessed the originality he sought. The key to the formula lay in the idea of a flawed hero. Two of his earlier creations, the Thing and the Hulk, were monstrously disfigured. Now Lee moved on to develop heroes who were more subtly impaired, either by common handicaps or spiritual unease.

This served a two-fold purpose: First, it set Marvel comics thoroughly apart from those of the competition, populated as they were by flawless supermen; second, it opened the doors to melodrama, which Marvel's fans valued as highly as adventure. From the latter there also emerged a body of ongoing soap operas which led to the growth of a "Marvel Universe", an almost organic entity in which the overall unity of the line took precedence over any single series.

This was most pronounced in two heroes he created apart from Kirby and Ditko, both featuring physical handicaps. The first of these was Iron Man, who took over the one monster title left vacant by Thor, Ant-Man and the Human Torch (*Tales Of Suspense* #39, March 1963). His alter ego, Tony Stark, is a wealthy inventor and munitions-maker, living the life of the blithe playboy until he takes a fateful trip to Vietnam. While accompanying a battalion to see his deadly inventions in action, he steps on a landmine and is capture by the Reds. Despite the fact that a piece of shrapnel lodged in his heart gives him only days to live, the fiendish communists demand that he devise weapons for them. Stark fools them, however, constructing a suit of electronic armor—not, as he tells his captors, for their soldiers, but for himself, which both keeps his injured heart beating and gives him tremendous strength and such powers as flight. He escapes the Reds, reborn as a super-hero, "but," as he tells us, "in order to remain alive, I must spend the rest of my life in this iron prison!"

Like the Thing, the Hulk and Spider-Man before him, Iron Man was thus another hero both blessed and cursed by his powers. Lee found a new twist on the theme with this new hero who was actually physically far weaker and more vulnerable than a normal man but who becomes a hero only with the use of a device. As happened with Peter Parker, Tony Stark's special status raised a wall between him and human society, for although he found he did not need his full armor to survive, he would always have to wear his massive chestplate under his clothing. If nothing else, this would preclude any intimacy with women for the former playboy.

Lee strove for a tone of hard-bitten realism with Iron Man, having Stark occasionally afflicted by dangerous heart troubles while reacting to his new isolation with anger and snappishness at the people around him—particularly his two loyal employees, Happy Hogan (a sad-faced ex-boxer whom Stark uses as a chauffeur) and Pepper Potts (the cute but unglamorous secretary in love with her boss). He also strove to place Iron Man in the political realities of his day, beginning his tale not in some imaginary war-torn country but in Vietnam, and pitting him against a long series of communist opponents: The Red Barbarian (TS 42, June 1963); The Crimson Dynamo (TS 46, October 1963); The Mandarin, a sort of Red Chinese Fu-Manchu (TS 50, February 1964); The Scarecrow, who sells stolen Stark weapons to Cuba (TS 51, March 1964); a Russian seductress called the Black Widow (TS 57, September 1964); and still others.

The mere fact that Iron Man had an emotional and political focus made him more interesting than Ant-Man, the Torch and the

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT PERSON IS GONE! HE WAS SUCH A GENTLE, QUIET, AUTUMN-BRAND BUSINESS. THERE'S SO MUCH I'LL MISS ABOUT HIM... BUT I'M NOTHING BUT NO LIGHTS...
HALLO! ANYONE HOME?
I'LL SEE TO IT THAT MATT MURDOCK'S KILLER IS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE, SERGEANT. ELSE WHAT I'M NOT A DISPASSIONATE POLICEMAN ANYMORE. MURDOCK WAS MY FRIEND, AND I'LL HUNT HIS THIEF MYSELF!
I'M NO DETECTIVE, SIR, BUT I SHOULD BE HELP TO KNOW THAT I DIDN'T MY TOUCH IS SO SENSITIVE!
I CAN EVEN BLEND THE FOOTSTEPS FOR EACH DIFFERENT PERSON TO HIM!
A FEW HOURS LATER
MATT MURDOCK, SIR? I'M AFRAID I DON'T KNOW THE GENTLEMAN. BUT IF YOU'LL WAIT A MOMENT, I'LL CHECK THE APPOINTMENT BOOK...
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN TELL YOU, SIR, EXCEPT THAT MR. MURDOCK WAS A VERY KIND AND GENTLE MAN. I'VE WORKED FOR HIM FOR THREE YEARS AND I'LL MISS HIM TERRIBLY.
THE COPS HAVE BEEN THROUGH HERE UNDER MY FEET ALL DAY, AND I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THEM! I'M GOING TO LOCK UP AND GO HOME. GOOD NIGHT, MR. DAREDEVIL.
THROUGH THE LONG NIGHT, THE HEROIC MAN WHO IS SUPER SENSITIVE TO SOUND PATROLS THE ROOFTOPS OF THE HELL'S KITCHEN AREA. HE'S ON THE LOOKOUT FOR CRIMINALS, BUT DOESN'T EXPECT TROUBLE TONIGHT...
KEEP THOSE LOOKOUTS, DAREDEVIL! I'M GOING TO CHECK OUT THE ALLEY BELOW. I'M SURE THAT'S WHERE THE CRIME WOULD HAVE A GREAT WEAPON FOR DAREDEVIL!
ALLEY BELOW
I'LL HANDLE IT! I'M GOING DOWN TO A SHORE LEADING TO THE ALLEY. I'LL USE THE PARACHUTE AS A PURPOSE WEAPON!

The man without fear. Matt Murdock overcomes his blindness to become a costumed crimefighter and as Daredevil avenge the murder of his father. Along the way he and friend Foggy Nelson open their law firm and both fall in love with the same woman, Karen Page

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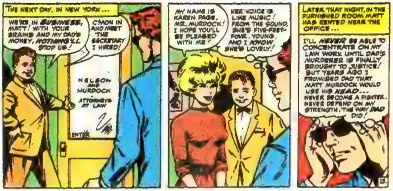
early Thor, and the fact that Lee consistently wrote the strip himself suggests that those dramatic and social themes were what really mattered to him. Unfortunately he had difficulty keeping his emotional scenes from breaking down into predictable melodrama and his communists from being swallowed up by the cliches of propaganda. Furthermore, his artistic partner, Don Heck, was ill-suited to the task of creating superhero adventures. He was a fairly naturalistic, static penciller with a scratchy style of inking who had done good work for Lee on western and war stories during the 1950s. The small size of the Marvel "bullpen", however, pressed him into superhero work in 1963, where his subdued action and messy panels were highly inappropriate. Heck's original conception of Iron Man's armor was a monstrous bulky affair that seemed to be bolted together from stovepipes. Although he streamlined him shortly (TS 48, December 1963), he was never completly able to keep him from looking awkward in action. He also lacked Kirby's background as a writer-artist and Ditko's natural flair for plotting, with the result that Iron Man's adventures never had the compelling quality of Spider-Man's or the punch of the FF's.

DAREDEVIL

The theme of a hero having to overcome a physical handicap struck a cord with Lee and he promptly repeated the idea with a blind, costumed acrobat named Daredevil (who, due to delays in production, would not appear on the stands until the next year). His remaining senses miraculously heightened by radioactivity, blind lawyer Matt Murdock finds himself able to locate objects and identify people by touch and hearing. Training himself Batman-style in combat and acrobatics, he dons a flamboyant costume and takes to the rooftops to combat crime (DD 1, May 1964). In his gymnastic fighting style and freewheeling attitude Daredevil captured much of the spirit of Spider-Man, and even his foes—the likes of the Owl, Stilt-Man and the Fellowship of Fear—were reminiscent of such Lee-Ditko gimmick villains as the Vulture, Doctor Octopus and the Enforcers. The series was graced by lively art, first by Golden Age master Bill Everett, then freelancer Joe Orlando, and for nine issues by Wally Wood, the elegant artist who had given polish and restraint to Kirby's work as an inker on *Challengers*. With his compact figures posed like graceful statues, his quiet work provided a refreshing balance to the usual rambunctiosness of early Marvels. When Wood left (after DD 11, December 1965) to work for a new comics company called Tower, he was replaced by John Romita, who gave him a much more standard superhero look.

The derivative qualities of Daredevil soon began to work against him. A pseudo-vision called "radar sense", dimly reminiscent of spider-sense, was added to his abilities and threatened to


THE NEXT DAY, IN NEW YORK...
HELLO! IS KAREN PAGE, MR. MURDOCK'S SECRETARY, IN?
KAREN PAGE IN YOUR OFFICE, SIR!
HELLO, KAREN! MATT MURDOCK HERE! I'M AT THE AIRPORT! I'M ON MY WAY TO YOUR BRAINS AND MY OWN MONEY, NOTHING'S LEFT! STOP US!
ENTER
MY NAME IS KAREN PAGE, MR. MURDOCK! I HOPE YOU'LL BE PLEASED WITH ME!
KEE! VOICE! LIKE MUSIC! FROM THE SOUND, SHE'S FIRSHEEN-TEEN! AND I KNOW! SWEET! LOVELY!
LATER THAT NIGHT, IN THE DARKENED ROOM, MATT HAS RENTED NEAR THE OFFICE...
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON MY LAW WORK UNTIL DAD'S MURDERER IS FINALLY BROUGHT TO JUSTICE! BUT YEARS AGO I PROMISED DAD THAT I'D NEVER USE MY GIFTS TO HURT NO MORE... I'LL NEVER BECOME A FIGHTER... HAVE DEFIED ON MY STRENGTH, THE WAY DAD TAUGHT ME!

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undermine the fascinating innovation of his blindness. In his private life, the similarities to Iron Man—with Foggy Nelson, Murdock's sad-faced partner, and Karen Page, the secretary who loves her employer in silence—were too great. Murdock's blindness, no longer much of a problem for the radar-bearing Daredevil, became mainly a vehicle for agony, self-pity and star-crossed love. "Farewell, Matt... my darling!" Karen thinks during one parting. "If only you could have *seen* me... seen the *lovelight* in my eyes!" While Matt thinks, "For a time I almost dared to hope... that Karen might feel about me as I felt about her! Yet the emotion I mistook for love was merely pity... pity for a man without sight!" (DD 12, January 1966).

ALIENATION

Lee did not limit his new crop of innovations to work with minor Marvel artists. His next two off-beat heroes were created respectively with Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby. Although not physically disabled, each suffered from

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With arrogance and pride Stephen Strange fails from the height of success to the depths of despair and must rebuild both his world and himself

some kind of alienation from society. (Another creation with Kirby, an entire team of alienated heroes, must be treated later.)

The most impressive Marvel hero of 1963 was Dr. Strange, for his particular brand of alienation was able to partake of the darkness and eeriness which co-creator Steve Ditko had mastered in his horror and science fiction work. Stephen Strange is introduced in the origin as the world's foremost surgeon, yet also the most arrogant and greedy of men. But Strange is involved in an automobile accident. When he discovers that, due to nerve damage, he will never be able to operate again, his world falls apart at the seams. He degenerates to a hobo drifter until, one day, he overhears two sailors talking about the Ancient One, a sorcerer reputed to possess the power to cure anything. Strange finds his way to the Ancient One's stronghold in the mountains of India. At first, the Ancient One refuses to help him because he senses in Strange selfish motives. But later, when Strange discovers that the Ancient One's pupil, Baron Mordo, is secretly planning to overthrow his master, he is filled with concern for the old sage. Sensing this, and pleased to have reached the good side of Stephen Strange, the Ancient One at last makes the former surgeon his disciple in the mystic arts (ST 115, December 1963). Although the new sorcerous hero returns to America and takes up residence in a mysterious old house in Greenwich Village, the eldritch forces with which he tampers and the mystical nature of his studies leave him secluded from his fellow man. Thus, though neither handicapped, monstrous nor socially antipathetic, he was more completely removed from society than any hero before him.

Realizing that this creation was odd even for Marvel, Lee launched it tentatively as an intermittent back-up strip in *Strange Tales* (ST 110, 111, 114; July, August, November 1963). But the master mage soon drew an esoteric, loyal fandom who won him a regular berth there, behind the Human Torch. They saw immediately that Dr. Strange was different from anything that had come before, but not because of the emotionality or realism that had set Lee's earlier series apart. Strange's powers and fundamental alienation took him, from the start, into weird dimensions far removed from the concerns of men, including the realm of sleep, where he battled the evil personification of Nightmare (ST 111, 116; August 1963, January 1964). In those

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OUR MYSTICAL SAGA BRINGS US A DIMENSION SO ALIEN, SO INCREDIBLE, SO UTTERLY BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION, THERE ARE NO WORDS IN ANY EARTHLY LANGUAGE TO ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE IT! FOR THIS IS THE DIMENSION OF THE DREAD DORMAMMU... AND IT IS HERE THAT OUR TALE BEGINS!
I WARN YOU, TO SEND THE ANCIENT ONE TO FIGHT IN YOUR STEAD! YOU ARE TOO YOUNG... YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTIC ARTS CANNOT BEGIN TO EQUAL HIS!
NO, DREADED ONE! IT IS ME WHOM THE ANCIENT ONE HAS SENT... AND IT IS ME WHOM YOU MUST BATTLE!
GRAH! ALL THROUGH THE AGES, WITLESS CREATURES HAVE COME HERE DARED TO CHALLENGE ME... AND ALL HAVE MET THE SAME DEADLY FATE! EQUAL GIVE UP THE ANCIENT ONE TO ME... OR BEFORE I SLAUGHTER YOU TO YOUR FINAL BATTLE!
FOR I NO LONGER DERIVE PLEASURE FROM DEFEATING WEAK OPPONENTS! THE SPORT NOW BORES ME!
AND SO...MOMENTS LATER...
HE SOUNDED SO SURE OF HIMSELF... SO TOTALLY CONFIDENT... HE REALLY MUST BE SO CONSTANTLY UNBEATABLE!
THEN, SUDDENLY, THE MYSTERIOUS FEMALE WHO HAD TRIED TO WARN DR. STRANGE WHEN HE ENTERED THE DREAD DIMENSION AGAIN APPEARS!...
NEED MY WORDS COME FROM ANOTHER WORLD?
YOU HATE YOUR BROTHER! NOTHING CAN STOP HIM IF HE HAS MADE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE DREADED ONE!
EVEN THOUGH I FEAR HIM, IN THE ATTEMPT, I DARE NOT FALTER! MY LIFE HERE IS NOTHING!
NO!! IT IS NOT ONLY OF YOU I AM THINKING! BY SOME UNTRACEABLE MIRACLE YOU SHOULD THWART ME... COULD MEAN THE END OF LIFE!
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
THEN YOU MUST BE SHOWN!... PREPARE YOURSELF FAINTLY MORTAL PREMISE FOR RIGHT AS A NO HUMAN EYES HAVE EVER BEHELD!
...BY THE ENTRANCE ARRIVAL THE ENTRANCE TO... THE BEYONDER!
AND NOW, FOLLOW ME... AND BE PREPARED TO WITNESS THE INCREDIBLE!
I MUST BE VIGILANT... IT MIGHT BE A TRAP, AND YET, MY INSTINCTS TELL ME SHE IS SINCERE!
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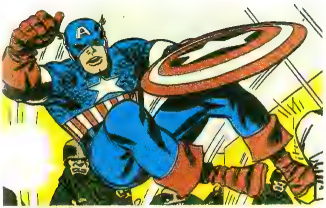
Ditko at his best

stories it was Ditko's fantastic landscapes that stole the show—if landscapes they can be called, for his other worlds were vast, open spaces with no up or down, no horizon or vanishing point, only floating pathways linking one aerial island to another, impeded by doorways set in space, disembodied snake-jaws waiting to snap down on the unwary traveller, and legions of mindless, horrid creatures harking to the commands of dark lords. Battles were never fought with fists and feet in those worlds, but with incantations ("In the name of the dread Dormammu... In the name of the all-seeing Agamotto...") with plasmic blasts of mystic force, with undulating bonds and webs of magic and often with such tricks of the trade as hypnotism and astral projection. The effect of these brief, tightly-plotted stories was an eeriness that bordered on the hallucinatory, one of the very few cases of a comic book that succeeded in being genuinely disturbing.

The repetition of these short mystic voyages might have become tedious, but with *Strange Tales* #126 (November 1964) Lee and Ditko began applying some of the continuity they had mastered with *Spider-Man*. The Ancient One has learned that Dormammu, the most powerful of the mystic lords from whom Strange draws his power, is planning to invade the world of men. Strange enters Dormammu's bizarre universe and confronts his new foe, a man-like creature with a head of fire who surveys all his realm from a throne suspended in space. After fighting him to a stalemate, Strange finds his powers increased and the world of men seemingly safe (ST 127, December 1964). But soon Dormammu enlists Strange's old foe Baron Mordo to capture and immobilize their mutual enemy, and Strange must flee Mordo's ectoplasmic servants through all the exotic corners of the Earth (ST 130-133, March-June 1965). When Strange again enters Dormammu's dark realm he is saved from a trap by the rebellious sorceress Clea, who is to become his acolyte and lover (ST 134, July 1965). Strange's search for the key to containing the ever-more powerful Dormammu leads him at last on a search for Eternity, the embodiment of all life and matter in the universe. Eternity, however, in classic mythical form, will only say, "You already possess the means to defeat your foes! Power is not the only answer! Events have occurred which require a key... and wisdom is that key!" (ST 138, November 1965). At last Strange uses his growing wisdom to play upon Dormammu's arrogance, until the lord of the dark dimension assaults Eternity himself, a fight no one can win (ST 146, July 1966). With this twenty-one issue story, its scope steadily broadening to include more and more levels of the universe, Marvel began composing the "cosmic picture" that would distinguish it during the rest of the 1960s.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Lee's next experiment with an alienated superhero went in a completely opposite direction. The successes of the revived Human Torch and Sub-Mariner made inevitable the return of Timely Comics' third Golden Age star Captain America, particularly since Jack Kirby, his co-creator, was a driving force at Marvel. But the transference of old powers to a new character, as with the Torch, seemed inappropriate for a War-era hero like Cap, while allowing him to have aged twenty years would have left him (unlike the super-human Sub-Mariner) decrepit. The problem was avoided when the new superhero team called the Avengers found Cap frozen in an Arctic ice-block, preserved as a young man since a plunge into an icy sea at the end of World War II. Though still filled with fighting spirit, Cap is a man reborn into a strange era; and, still more upsetting for him, he awakes to find his beloved sidekick, Bucky Barnes, long dead, having perished in the same incident that left his mentor



Displaced in time...The indomitable Captain America, having defeated time itself, returned two decades after World War II to lead the Avengers. While Cap struggled to fit into society, The Hulk wanted to be left alone. His early Jeckle-Hyde nature slowly changed with time to the dumb brute of today

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frozen. "What happens next??" he ponders. "Can't return to my career as Captain America—it would be meaningless without Bucky! I don't belong in this age—in this year—no place for me—if only Bucky were here—if only...." Cap, however, briefly finds a surrogate Bucky in the Hulk's young friend, Rick Jones, and, inspired by their heroic example, proudly joins Iron Man, Giant Man and Thor in the Avengers (Av 4, March 1964).

His popularity in that group soon won him a series of his own, backing up Iron Man in *Tales Of Suspense*, which would be consistently written by Lee and drawn by Kirby. Although Lee tried to remind us occasionally of the poignancy of Cap's displacement and his almost morbid sorrow over Bucky's death, it was Kirby who dominated the series with his action-filled art. In Cap's first solo adventure we find him attacked by a gang of thugs armed with automatic pistols and an Iron Man-like suit of armor. Kirby treats us to seven pages (of a ten-page story) of flying bullets, hurtling bodies, judo-throws, crunching fists, bulging muscles and collapsing furniture, free of the encumbrance of plot or captions, executed with the exhuberant abandon of a saloon brawl in a big-screen western (TS 59, November 1964). Captain America, a non-super-powered acrobat who fights crime with sinews, muscles and an indestructable shield that can be thrown like a giant discus, was a perfect vehicle for the wild pugilism that Kirby did better than anyone. During this period Kirby began to leave behind the muddiness that had marred his earlier Marvel work and move into a clean, high-velocity storytelling style that would make him the most popular artist of the 1960s.

The format continued for three more issues, in which Cap fought a gang of acrobatic Nazi assassins, a communist Sumo wrestler in Vietnam and a whole cell-block full of convicts. But with the retelling of Cap's Golden Age origin (TS 63, March 1965) all need for characterization, reminders of alienation and mourning over Bucky's death were abandoned, for it and the next nine issues featured adventures set during World War II, in which Cap and Bucky gally turned back the tide of fascism. When Cap did return to the present (TS 71, November 1965), it was to enter a later phase of Lee-Kirby work.

Thus, where Dr. Strange's separation from society was obscured by the otherworldly placement of his adventures, Captain America's was circumvented by action-packed nostalgia. Evidently, with Ditko and Kirby, Lee would have little opportunity for the pathos that dominated *Iron Man* and *Daredevil*, series drawn by artists with less forceful visions of their own.

Captain America also illustrates the different approaches to Golden Age revivals employed by Marvel and DC. Where DC put their old heroes on a separate Earth, Marvel made them a part of the same historical continuum as its current heroes, thus further unifying their "Universe".

ANTI—HERO

The next two series that Lee launched represented a third avenue for his oddball heroes to follow. This was the role of the anti-hero, characters unaware of their heroic roles, not caring much for human society but nonetheless sympathetic to the reader. Lee had introduce his quintessential anti-heroes, the Hulk, in his own ill-fated title, and the Sub-Mariner, as a villain in the FF, at the dawn of the self-proclaimed "Marvel Age". At the time, apparently, readers were not prepared to take such characters to their hearts, but as they fell gradually in step with

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Lee's innovations, their opinions changed. The Hulk made frequent guest-appearances in 1963 and 1964, always battling the hero but usually protesting that he only wanted to be left alone. These stories were always followed by surprising outpourings of "Bring back the Hulk" letters. When Lee and Kirby launched a comic combining Marvel's heroes into a team, the Hulk was pressed into service as a very reluctant hero, and fans seemed to like him in that role (Av 1, October 1963). At the same time, in the first giant-sized Annual of *The Fantastic Four*, the Sub-Mariner at last found his lost race of Atlanteans, relieving him of his main source of rage at the surface-world and enabling him to don the noble robe of Prince Namor of Atlantis (FF An. 1, 1963). When he reencountered the FF after the reunion, it was as an arrogant, but admirable, ally (FF 33, December 1964).

Of the two, the Hulk seemed to provoke a greater response from the fans. Perhaps the lumbering beast who only wants society to go away and leave him alone said more to the adolescent psyche than the proud ruler

IT'S THAT I.C.B.M. YOU HEAR ON THE PREMISES. WE'VE HAD SOME COMPLAINTS THAT IT YOU KNOW WHAT'S WITH ALL THE RUMBLING FOR THIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
OH, IS THAT ALL? WELL, DON'T WORRY! I HAVE A PERMIT FROM THE C.A.A.! COME ON, I'LL SHOW IT TO YOU.
OH, THAT'S FINE AND WISE YOU'RE AT IT, COULD I HAVE YOUR AUTO-GRAPH FOR MY PARTNER? HE GAVES FAMOUS PEOPLE'S WARTS! THE LAST ONE HE GOT WAS FINK LEE'S.
WHAT'S WITH ALL THE RUMBLING NOW? PROBABLY ANOTHER STABLETEN... WAITIN FOR DATES WITH ANDREA DEL!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
BUT THE THING TURNED OUT TO BE A POOR PROPHET, FOR...
YOU HEARD ME. I WON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT THOSE FLAMES YOU PEOPLE SHOOT OFF AT ALL HOURS! THEY FRIGHTEN MY WIFE!
WHAT'S GOIN ON HERE? IT'S A MIDDLE OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLIN' ON THE LINE!
IS THIS THE THING YOU'VE BEEN GIVIN' ME LOOK AT YOU YESTER-DAY? I'M RECOVERIN' FROM HOME! WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO ABOUT IT?
EVERY TIME YOU HIT THE BUILDING SHAKES! IF YOU DON'T QUIT SHOOTIN' OFF, I'LL COMPLAIN TO THE LANDLORD!
I KNOW THAT, SO I'VE KEPT WEAPONS OF THESE TO A MINIMUM! I'VE RECORDED THIS TO THE A.B.C. COMMUNITY BOARD, BUT YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT!
© Marvel Comics Group

Early Marvel tales combined humor with action, pathos with power and personal crisis with professional crisis

of a wronged people. Thus it was that when Lee decided Giant-Man could no longer carry *Tales To Astonish* alone, he added the Hulk as the second feature (TA 60, October 1964).

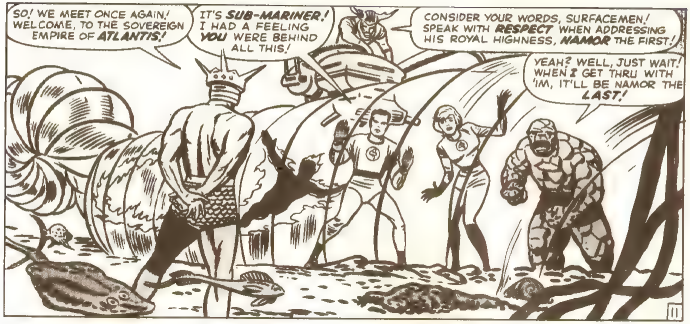
The first eight issues came as quite a surprise: The Hulk, the seeming epitome of big-muscle Jack Kirby characters, was to be drawn by Steve Ditko. And it read like a Lee-Ditko series, with a vivid cast of characters interwoven into a complex soap opera and an on-going plot overshadowed by the evil of the mysterious Leader, bringing to mind the Green Goblin and Dormammu. Building upon the continuity techniques of other Ditko strips, *The Hulk* broke new ground as the first super-hero series in which the stories never ended, but rather ran from cliff-hanger to cliff-hanger in a continuous narrative—an effective device for making a long saga out of half-length stories.

With Ditko's departure and Kirby's return to the character (TA 68, June 1965), the series took a dramatic turn. The Hulk's huge fists and mammoth strength were turned to good effect as explosive action squeezed out personal insights and stripped down the soap opera. Where Lee and Ditko had had the Hulk travelling around the world in his tangles with the Leader, Lee and Kirby sent him to the moon, a distant solar system, the far future and the Earth's core. When Lee and Ditko's

EVENTUALLY, THE TASK WAS COMPLETED!
PAIN?? THAT IS FOR LESSER MEN! WHAT CAN PAIN MEAN TO VICTOR VON DOOM??
LET US KNOW IF IT DOES YOU, MASTER...
AND NOW, AT LONG LAST, FOR THE FINISHING TOUCH!
BUT, MASTER, IT HAS NOT COMPLETELY COOLED YET!
SAY NO MORE, MY BROTHER! HE WILL TOLERATE NO FURTHER DELAY! QUICKLY, ROBOT AIDE, AS CYBORG CAN!
NEVER AGAIN WILL MORTAL EYES GAZE UPON THE HIDEOUS COUNTENANCE OF VICTOR VON DOOM!
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THERE IS NO VICTOR VON DOOM! HE HAS VANISHED... ALONG WITH THE HANDSOME FACE IT ONCE POSSESSED! BUT IN HIS PLACE THERE SHALL BE ANOTHER...
...MIGHTIER, STRONGER, MORE BRILLIANT, MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER BEFORE!
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, I SHALL BE KNOWN AS... DOCTOR DOOM!
© Marvel Comics Group

Leader plots had revolved around spies and intrigue, Lee and Kirby's resolution involved a quest for an orb of cosmic knowledge (TA 73, November 1965) another sign of the expanding scope that was becoming Marvel's new fascination.

Through it all, the Hulk's personality continued to teeter wildly. At first reminiscent of Mr. Hyde, he was destructive and anti-social but reasonably eloquent. But soon he became a dumb tough guy ("I'll show 'em!" he cries in TA 65, March 1965) and then a sub-human brute, with such dialogue as, "Dead! Saved my life!


SO! WE MEET ONCE AGAIN! WELCOME, TO THE SOVEREIGN EMPIRE OF ATLANTIS!
IT'S SUB-MARINER! I HAD A FEELING YOU WERE BEHIND ALL THIS!
CONSIDER YOUR WORDS, SURFACEMEN! SPEAK WITH RESPECT WHEN ADDRESSING HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, NAMOR THE FIRST!
YEAH? WELL, JUST WAIT! WHEN I GET THRU WITH 'IM, IT'LL BE NAMOR THE LAST!
11

© Marvel Comics Group

Died for Hulk! Was friend! Died for Hulk!" (TA 66, April 1965). For a time, with a thin explanation, he regained the mind of Bruce Banner, but gradually it degenerated. It was during this decay that Lee at last began to find the note of angry, injured alienation toward which he had seemingly been groping all along. "Nuts!" says the half-brute when the Leader proposes that they join forces to rule the earth. "I don't want any part of this crummy world! You can have it!" (TA 72, October 1965).

As his thinking becomes more brutish, the Hulk's failure to understand why mankind persists in hounding and attacking him becomes more poignant. This is truest after Rick Jones, believing his monstrous friend dead, finally tells the world that Banner and the Hulk are one and the same (TA 77, March 1966). Thereafter Banner can have no peace either as human or as monster. When, with the following issue, Bill Everett began pencilling and inking over Kirby's basic layouts, the Hulk truly hit his stride (TA 78, April 1966). Everett's exaggerated, cartoonish style emphasized the power and brutality of the character, but the subtleties of his lush inks were able to bring out an undertone of sadness. When the Hulk huddles in misery under a desert sky, moaning "No place to go! No one to turn to. The world hates the Hulk!... Why? Why? Why does it never end?!!" our hearts truly go out to the big brute (TA 80, June 1966). Even though Kirby and Everett left the series after three more issues, this combination of puppy-dog misery with destructive force at last became a consistent characterization that was to last for the next decade-and-a-half.

IMPERIOUS REX: THE SUB-MARINER

The Sub-Mariner was a completely different case, an anti-hero in mankind's eyes who became a hero pure-and-simple by being removed from mankind. In his guest-appearances in other Marvel comics he usually served as an antagonist, but one whose motives could be justified by his loyalty to his own people. When he squeezed Giant-Man into oblivion to begin his own series alongside the Hulk, his adventures turned solely on his underwater deeds as Prince of Atlantis (TA 70, August 1965). Storming about the palace, wooing his blue-skinned but beautiful Lady Dorma, crying out "Imperius Rex!", he was the model of an arrogant but devoted ruler, usually pitted against the Warlord Krang for control of the throne. Only when he occasionally surfaced to battle other Marvel characters did he slip into his old ambivalent role. Although thus remote from Lee's earlier themes of discontent and isolation, the Sub-Mariner gave us plenty of high-faluting, gladiator-style adventure, with the added attractions of undersea perils and a hero whose jet-speed swimming approximated flight. Best of all, the series featured the art of Gene Colan, newly arrived at Marvel after leaving a line of horror comics published by Warren. His deep shadows and heavy use of blacks, combined with fluid figures and highly naturalistic characterizations, gave his undersea scenes a moodiness, a mystery and an odd believability that never let the reader forget that he was in a strange, exotic land.

By the middle of 1965, Lee had laid the foundations of a unique superhero stable. Although still marred by rough, inconsistent writing, frequently hurried art and low-quality production, his comics succeeded on the strength of their daring, characterization, running continuity and emotional power. Revivals and improvements of Golden Age heroes no longer held the day. Careful, conservative craftsmanship was no longer enough. "Mighty Marvel", in Lee's own estimation, had become "a lusty gusty irreverent mischief-maker in the wondrous world of comix," and despite all his company's flaws, he was succeeding in the marketplace and the opinions of critical fans. Now he could carry out a further project—the unification of the Marvel Universe—a project which pleased the fans so much that it would comprise the next movement in the company's history.

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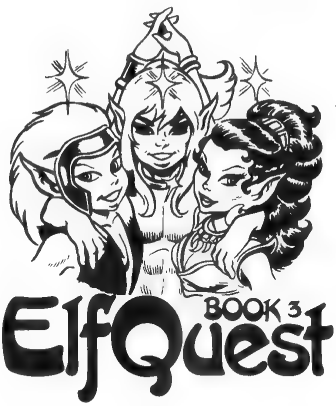

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BATMAN... has to go on forever and ever, so there's not a lot we can do with him. But we all know that the characters in *Camelot 3000* can die by issue 12. So there is an aura of suspense about the series because you know that nothing is absolute.

sustain it for another twenty years, you can put all of your energy into it. A classic example of that recently is Frank Miller's *Ronin*. Whatever you felt about the project, Frank did everything he wanted to do creatively on that book. He emptied himself emotionally. When he finished it, the end of it finally came, he collapsed, like into a stupor. He went on a three week vacation, just to get away totally from any thoughts about creativity. When he returns, he'll think about what he wants to do next.

"That was never possible in comics before, because if you were an artist on *Batman* there was this month's issue to be followed by next month's issue to be followed by... endlessly. I think you can get a better creative package because it does have a structure—a beginning, a middle and an end, with flux, if possible, in the storyline. As a matter of fact, *Ronin* ended on a totally different note than that envisioned by Frank at the start. As the story went along, it wrote itself. He was able to end it any way he wanted to."

A third advantage is that the writer and artist have total control over the characters involved. They don't have to pick up from where some other team has left a hero. They don't have to think that one day they, too, will pass their ideas onto other workers. "That's absolutely important from a standpoint of being creative," Dick insisted. "As a personal example of this, showing how creativity can be stiffled, I happened to pencil and ink one issue of *Conan*, years back. I was picking it up from people who had drawn it earlier, and similar people would be drawing it next. I felt absolutely obligated to mtch the style. I did a John Buscema/Neal Adams style on the book, because they were the people known for doing the book before I took it over, and it was not proper in my mind to introduce a new, discordant style. Nor did I want to hand that over to whoever was going to do it next. So it wasn't terribly creative. It was a work job—take the money and run. I just sat down, did what I was supposed to do, and then got out of the way.

"However, things are entirely different on *Jonni Thunder*, my new book that I mentioned earlier. I don't know how it will turn out, because I'm not far enough through it. I've only finished the first book in pencil. But whatever I do there, I don't need to worry about who'll follow it, or who came before I can do anything I want. I can change my mind in the middle of a panel and do it a different way. Whatever I do in that book will be uniquely mine, and I need only to satisfy myself on it. And that is going to create an environment in which creativity is possible. It doesn't mean it's going to happen, but creativity is possible if there are no givens, and the artist and the writer can establish their givens as they go along.

"It really makes it easier to sit down and work, too, because you don't have to look at anything else. You can focus your own attitudes, your own ideas, your own feelings about the material, and make sure that they get there. Whatever they are.

"The only way I could comfortably think of taking over an established book is if someone said to me what they said to Frank Miller—'Here we have *Daredevil*, and it's not selling; it's terrible, do whatever you want with it.' I could see doing an on-going book that way. Even Batman, who's a favorite character of mine—and I love drawing Batman. If the assignment were offered to me, I would take it—but after six issues I probably wouldn't want to do it any more. I'd have had my fill. Because I could not experiment beyond the parameters already established."

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

With this view of the future of comics, Dick discussed where DC would be going. "I really feel we're understaffed," he said. "That's not a matter of company policy, we've just run out of office room! We're expanding so quickly that the amount of physical space we have simply isn't up to the expansion, so we don't have as many

Variety is the important thing to me, personally. Diversity is the key word—I want to be in a lot of different places.

people as we need. It's not that I don't have the budget to hire the people, it's just that we don't have the space to put them. I'm willing to accept that as a temporary situation, and I think it will be that. If you're creative here, you can surround yourself with the best. It's easy to be creative here for me—I've got the best writers and artists in the field here.

"What I enjoy most—and I've done it all, from inking, pencilling, writing, line-editing to running my own business—is what I'm now doing. I like the *variety* of comics. I like the fact that I can be doing different things on different days. I'm kind of uncomfortable with the length of time that superheroes have been around. I've said so in my 'Meanwhile' column, so that's not something new. I'd like to see other genres that are read regularly by other people. I'd love to develop a girls' line of comic books. *Amethyst* is a tentative start at this—a very tentative start, but it is a start. We have two or three other properties in development. You have to make a *line* in order for those things to go well. We're also developing a children's line of comic books right now. I'd like to touch every potential market place.

"And within the male fantasy market place, which is the largest one by far, I'd like to produce things that aren't *Superman* on the one hand and *Ronin* on the other, as extremes. We're going to do some detective stuff; we're going to do some mystery; we're going to do some science fiction. We're not just going to do *Star Trek*, which isn't really science fiction—you could translate the story to the Old West and it would work as well. We're going to do some *real* science fiction, in our graphic novel line especially. As I mentioned, we're dealing with some science fiction authors to write comic material for us.

"Variety is the important thing to me, personally. Diversity is the key word—I want to be in a *lot* of different places.

"Personally, I enjoy working with an artist on a job that didn't quite come out right, doing overlays to show him where it might be improved, as I do reading a presentation—and I do quite a bit of that! I enjoy going to meetings; I spend a lot of time at meetings. Some of the wise people around here took the *House Of Mystery* logo and took out the word Mystery and put in Meetings, and I had a sign up for a while on my door saying *House Of Meetings!* All of the meetings that I have with anyone in Editorial are certainly worthwhile, and I enjoy meeting with the editorial staff anytime, any day.

"Next year is a very important, pivotal year for us."

DC UNIVERSE

With the Fiftieth Anniversary of DC Comics coming up in a few months time, the company is gearing up to some very important publications, chief of which is the *DC Universe* maxi-series. "At the end of this," Dick explained, "we'll find our Universe in a much, much more comfortable position. New readers will be able to understand what is happening in our Universe without having to understand hundreds of cross-references to look up in order to understand what has just happened.

"This will all happen in an interesting maxi-series that is tentatively called *Crisis On Infinite Earths*, and it will have this crisis feel to it for the entire series. Things will change. Some of our heroes will go away forever; some new ones will be introduced. We will end up with a Universe that can take us through the next 50 years.

"As it's an anniversary year, there's going to be lots of material to help us celebrate that anniversary. We also hope to create some revitalizations for our major long-term heroes, who've been around so long, and who need to have some new aspects developed. Things do tend to become stagnant after a while, and we've had a longer time to become stagnant than Marvel has. Marvel's current Universe dates back to the Sixties, while ours dates back to the Thirties. A considerable difference in time frame. Each new editor brings

his own sets of ideas to the title, often in the past with complete disdain for what had gone before. For those of our readers who are continuity freaks, it really creates a great deal of confusion.

"I have a letter on my desk that I'm going to respond to in my 'Meanwhile' column from a young reader, who says: 'I really hope you're going to give us a chance to understand what is going on in the DC Universe, because I can't. I'm 15 years old, and if you don't do a Handbook that deals with that Universe to keep up with it, I can't deal with the multiple Earth theories and so on.' Now, I can understand that viewpoint. At the time that these things were done, it probably made sense, but now... I'm content that what we have planned—which *may* be different from what we actually publish!—should leave us in a far neater state than we are in now. It will be possible for a casual reader to pick up issues of a DC comic book and read those, and maybe none before and none after, and still understand what he's read. What I've been saying around here is that we'll be ready to go into the next fifty years. The first fifty will be behind us, and we're really going to start new.

"What we're hoping for is that there will be a brand new DC with a brand new DC Universe, which will include some of our old characters, but revitalised for the new Universe, so that not only the Universe but its occupants will be somewhat different. The change itself should be exciting comic book reading, but what is just as important is that it will leave us in so much better shape to go on, and to be creative with what's already in place. It's a nightmare these days if you are a writer and would like to write *Superman* or *Wonder Woman* to find out what you need to know before you write it.

"You have to understand at the moment that there are two Batmans, one who died on another Earth... and right away, there you have a problem! Basically, what we are going to say is that *If it didn't happen in that series, it didn't happen.* So we can, by ommission, eliminate events. What we can say is 'This is the history of our Universe; this is the way it happened. In the beginning, there was man...'. We're going to take it from the dawn of man to as far into the future as we need to to cover our entire Universe. For example, we may retell the origins of all of the characters, including Superman. If it's not in that origin, it didn't happen, no matter how many origins went before it. Forget them all—this is the definitive one. By doing it that way, I hope we'll be able to accomplish all of our ends. To be honest with you, I'm not sure we can do it in twelve issues. My writers think that they can... I question their sanity! But I'm allowing it to be open-ended enough that if we need a few more issues to tell the story, we can take those issues.

For example, we may retell the origins of all of the characters, including Superman. If it's not in that origin, it didn't happen.

"As of last report, we were going to do it chronologically. That means we start at the dawn of man and work our way up, with the characters being introduced in their proper order, and at what we now consider to be the proper times for each of those occurences. We will probably end up, for example, with there being no Superboy. Superboy as a costumed hero may not exist, because Clark Kent made his decision to become Superman at a later point in his life. We *may* create another Superboy later on in the series—that possibility exists—who is concurrent with Superman, but I think it's kind of clumsy to have Superboy adventures that took place twelve years ago, because we have to update that 'twelve years ago' from time to time. It started out that it was in the Forties, then it went to the Fifties, then the Sixties and so forth.

"Similarly, my guess is—and it's just a guess—that Supergirl won't exist in the same fashion, either. It was originally reported that Krypton blew up, and there was *one* survivor. I kinda like that, and I'm willing to stick with it.

"Our editors and myself went away on a retreat recently for two days to discuss the changes, the anniversary and the need to work closely together to make it as exciting as it possibly can be. The entire line for that year will have a consistency and an interrelationship that our line has never had before. We have never been known for our consistent Universe, or our editors all working together, and I want to change all of that. I think that we can do all of it in the same year. 1985 is going to be an interesting and exciting time for us and for the readers!"

Continued from page 9

CHUCK JONES TAKES OVER

When Bob Clampett left Warners in 1946 to join the ill-fated Screen Gems animation studio, Chuck Jones became the main director for "that little black duck".

Jones admits that his approach differed from other directors, and that at first he had to understand just who Daffy really was. "I had no problem with him after I began to understand what he was all about. My Daffy and Friz's are a little different. Friz was the one, you might say, who kind of got him into that cowardly self-preservation. The minute he did it, I understood; I knew how I'd feel. It's the awfulness, when you're on the battlefield, of realizing that when your buddy is shot that your basic feeling is one of relief that it wasn't *you*. Right? Well, Daffy says that. He says, 'I may be a mean little duck, but I'm an alive little duck.' And when he gave Bugs up to the Abominable Snowman ('The Abominable Snow Rabbit'—1961), he said, 'I know ith a dethpicable thing to do, but I'm different from other people: pain *hurts* me.' I was just getting hold of Daffy when the damn studio shut down. I love Daffy. He's a marvelous, marvelous character.

"Daffy Duck was like Lew Ayres," Jones continued, "who got so involved making the Dr. Kildare films just before the war that he actually volunteered for the Medical Corps. In 'The Scarlet Pumpernickel' (1950), when Daffy's trying to convince J.L. Warner that a great script is perfect for him, I'm sure that he thought that everything in there was possible, that he was Super-Duck or whatever.

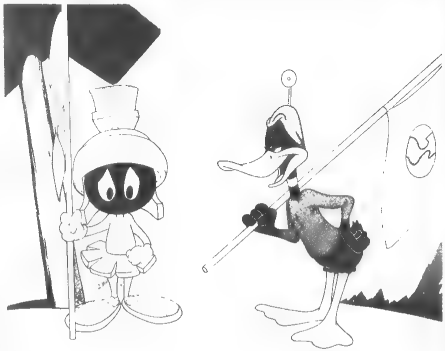
"We're basically working in terms of human dignity, which is true of Daffy, or the Coyote or any of the others. 'Robin Hood Daffy' (1958) is one of the best parodies I ever worked on. Daffy is Robin Hood but Porky won't believe that because Daffy is such an idiot, running into trees and doing all kinds of things Robin Hood obviously wouldn't do. Daffy is not trying to achieve anything except to get Porky to believe he's Robin Hood. That's a natural thing. We can stand either love or hate but it's impossible to survive continuing indifference because it is humiliating. The preservation of Daffy's dignity depends on the avoidance of humiliation."[3]

THE JONES/MALTESE MATINEE

Chuck Jones and his writing partner Michael Maltese expanded the range of Daffy's adventures and used him as the central figure in satires of various genres. The most well-known is "Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century" (1953) which is a marvelous Space Opera send-up. Although seen on TV for years, especially on the long-running Saturday morning *Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Show*, it seemed in many ways as if it was being viewed for the first time when it was included in *The Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Movie* (1979, also known as *The Great American Chase).* Here we saw this cartoon and others as they must have originally looked when they played in theatres thirty years ago, with rich color and the graduated tones intact on airbrush scenes such as the disintegrator ray. On television all such subtleties were lost.

This cartoon and others also featured Chuck Jones adding some sly sides to the character of Porky Pig. This made the teamup with Daffy Duck something slightly different than the approach Bob Clampett had used.

"When we first started him," said Jones, "Porky was a Boy Scout kind of character. But in 'Rocket Squad' (1956) and 'Robin Hood Daffy' and in some of those others at the very end, Porky was beginning to develop into something interesting. I always felt that Porky Pig was the most subtle of all the charac-



"Marvin Martian" has just met his interplanetary match in "Duck Dodgers" in the 24½ Century" (1953) ©Warner Bros.

ters because he was consciously playing a part. He was obviously putting Daffy on, but it was a very subtle thing. In "Duck Dodgers In the 24½ Century' (1953) he was playing the space cadet, but he was 'playing' it."[4]

The cartoon "Rocket Squad" mentioned by Jones is often mistaken as a sequel to Duck Dodgers because it did come after and has many visual similarities. That cartoon was sort of an outer space *Dragnet* send-up which used the trappings of Space Opera as background rather than as targets.

In "Drip-Along Daffy" (1951) and "My Little Duckaroo" (1954), Daffy was the Masked Avenger (a Lone Ranger parody) with Porky (sporting beard stubble, no less) as "Comedy Relief". These cartoons are actually much funnier than Duck Dodgers and hold up better in repeated viewings.

But the real experimentation was in the legendary "Duck Amuck" (1953). The cartoon started out looking like "The Scarlet Pumpernickel" but then turned into an exercise in craziness as Daffy is tormented by the animator, abused by the camera and even turned into something resembling Flubadub from the old *Howdy Doody Show* (which was new in 1953). It was a cartoon without a plot which was as zany as anything ever done with the character. It climaxed with the camera pulling back to reveal the tormenting animator to be Bugs Bunny. A remake with a twist on this, called "Rabbit Rampage", in which Yosemite Sam was revealed to be the animator, was not as successful and is pale in comparison.

Chuck Jones introduced the rivalry concept of Daffy versus Bugs in which Bugs would succeed at something with seemingly effortless ease while Daffy would fail no matter how he tried. Even when the pair was being hunted by Elmer, Bugs would continually trick Elmer into shooting Daffy or, even more cleverly, trick Daffy into having Elmer shoot Daffy. But this always seemed to degrade the character of Daffy as he was just as wiley and clever as Bugs. In fact, in the Clampett shorts he was even more screwy than Bugs. As much as Jones likes "Robin Hood Daffy", that was not the same Daffy

Elmer, Bugs and Daffy in Chuck Jones' 'Rabbit Fire' (1951) © 1979 Warner Bros., Inc

Duck as was seen on the shorts by Clampett, McKimson and others in the Forties. Jones made Daffy a bit too civilized and in many respects gave him the frustrated temperament of Donald Duck.

MCKIMSON TRIES HIS HAND

A more interesting version of Daffy was done by Bob McKimson in shorts such as "Ducking The Devil" (1957) in which Daffy has to lure the escaped Tasmanian Devil back into town to collect a huge reward. He does it by playing music which calms the bizarre creature even though Daffy is clearly terrified of this whirling, eating-machine. The true nature of Daffy clearly comes through at the end when he's walking by the now-caged Devil and counting his reward. He drops a one dollar bill and the Tasmanian Devil snaps it up. Daffy furiously leaps into the cage and beats up the Devil to get his dollar back, exclaiming at the end, "I may be a coward, but I'm a *greedy* coward!" Now that's Daffy Duck!

Bob McKimson developed the Tasmanian Devil as a stupid foil for their clever characters like Bugs. His boss felt the character was obnoxious and after a couple of appearances put the kibosh on the Devil. But Jack Warner, the head of Warner Brothers, demanded that more be made and thus

Sketch of the Tasmanian Devil by Robert McKimson © Warner Bros., Inc (Photograph courtesy Robert McKimson)

the Tasmanian Devil was given a new lease on life. A lot of people liked this character. Stephen King liked it so much he wrote a horrifying short story about it called "The Crate" (which was used in the movie *Creepshow).*

UNDER DEPATIE-FRELENG

The Warner Brothers cartoon studio was shut down briefly in the early Sixties and when it started up again some of its best talent was gone. Under DePatie-Freleng, who would later do

the Pink Panther cartoon series, a whole barrel of insipid Daffy Duck-Speedy Gonzales cartoons were done. In these Daffy was the antagonist with the personality of Elmer Fudd while Speedy performed the antics which in earlier years Bugs or Daffy would have been pulling off. They were awful beyond belief. Even with directors like Robert McKimson working on them, they were hopeless. They're so mundane that they're shown uncut today on Saturday morning television.

THE TV SPECIAL

When the Warner Brothers cartoon unit shut down in 1969, no new cartoons with Bugs, Daffy and the others were seen until Chuck Jones began making his primetime specials in the late Seventies. Most of these were okay but a low point was hit when Jones tried making a sequel to Duck Dodgers. The original short had been used by George Lucas to run with *Star Wars* in San Francisco. Steven Spielberg had used some of it on a TV set in *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* when Porky Pig hands Marvin Martian a bomb and says, "Happy Birthday you thing from another world you!"

A new Duck Dodgers short was commissioned with an eye towards possible theatrical release. But the final product was so lacklustre in both animation and writing that it was aired in Network primetime instead. Even though Chuck Jones has rightly criticized Saturday Morning TV and called it "illustrated radio", the new Duck Dodgers was no better than typical Saturday Morning fare. It was tired and pointless. It just put the characters through their paces with dreary gags and weary direction. There was none of the grand wit of the old cartoons or any of the spark which made the originals so magical. Instead the viewer was left wondering why anyone was ever excited by Duck Dodgers, which is the saddest thing of all.

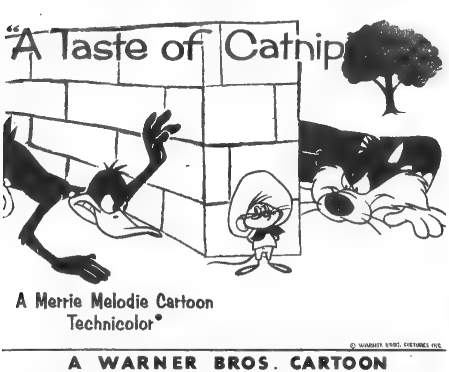
Daffy Duck, in any appearance, should always be bold and brash, just like the studio that created him was back in the heyday of the Warner Brothers cartoon.

[1]*The American Animated Cartoon*, Chuck Jones interviewed by Joe Adamson, page 139.

[2]An interview with Robert Clampett, *Funnyworld #12*, 1971.

[3]*The American Animated Cartoon*, Chuck Jones interviewed by Joe Adamson, page 130.

[4]Ibid. Page 131.



A typical example of inappropriate character match-ups from the waning days of Warner Brothers cartoons. © Warner Bros. Inc.

From 1930s Bugs was top cartoon character, however it became evident that Daffy was more interesting. © Warner Bros. Inc.

"Mister Voice", Mel Blanc is the most famous voice artist in cartooning history. © Warner Bros.

AND A WALKING PILE OF MOLD AND LICHEN AND CLOTTED WEEDS THAT THINKS IT'S A RATIONAL MAN?
I GUESS IT WOULD DO PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING
I WONDER WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE, SO WET AND RAW AND GREEN...
©1984 DC

without so much as a glance at the Wrightson original. Only the contours of the face remained lodged in my memory, and the knowledge that his body was a powerful mass of plant tissue. The initial results, as you can well see here, were less than satisfactory. The face and the eyes were close, but the all-too-human body shape captured none of the moody characteristics of the *true* Swamp Thing. In trying to dodge comparison with the Wrightson original, whose giant footsteps we were trying to follow, I had thrown the baby out with the bathwater!

The solution, of course, was to return to the character's "roots", as it were. To extrapolate on the more monstrous aspects of the Wein/Wrightson creation: add more weight to those massive slumped shoulders, his head jutting turtle-like on that bull neck, exaggerate the beetling brow and the facial 'muzzle'; emphasize the textures of the roots and overgrowth that ripple over the surface of his body. Reworking my pencils considerably, John arrived at a vision of the Swamp Thing that only a mother could love... or a father: Len Wein. Len liked the character study we delivered as part of our samples, and in a month or two we received word from Len that we had the book beginning with issue #16. There's no doubt in my mind that it was John's feel for the character that made these first sample pages work as well as they had to were we to secure the job. By the time I had to begin penciling #16, after many more sketches and considerable time spent analysing *all* the different approaches to the character that came out of the DC stable, I had cultivated a similar affinity for the Swamp Thing *we* wanted to depict.

My initial sketch, like many of the versions to follow the Wrightson and Redondo Swamp Things, simply wasn't true to the premise of the character. It was an ugly man rather than an elemental earth-monster; and while make-up artist Bill Munns, who created the rubber movie *Swamp Thing*, can certainly argue that the shortcomings of his version of the Swamp thing character were due to the very real limitations of having had to build a suit that would be worn by an actor (and create that suit with little time or money), a cartoonist does not work under such unfortunately pragmatic limitations. Munns' man-in-a-suit Swamp Thing of *course* looked too human in shape... but why was I taking the same route? A drawing is limited *only* by the skill and imagination of the cartoonist. Even given the deadline time factor, the imagination can still find the space necessary to soar and give shape to all manner of creatures. I was holding back. Cold feet, perhaps. Once John pointed me in the right direction, though, I took the dive and put my *all* into our work together.

Of particular interest in this discussion is yet another drawing John had worked up during Tom's days on the book, jarringly different from the page shown earlier in this column. Dated May of '82, drawn soon after Tom

Totleben's nude study of Abby.
Characters ©DC Comics

had begun his work on the series revival (SOTST #1 is cover dated May, 1982), this richly textured vision of the Swamp Thing brilliantly suggests the true organic nature of his anatomy. If memory serves me well (If not, apologies to all concerned), John showed the drawing to Len, who admired the penwork but found this depiction of his brainchild "too radical". Len always encouraged us to "reot 'em up" all we wished, but it was too much to have Swamp Thing's 'flesh' overgrown with moss and shoots, riddled with fungus and insects. It was just... too much.

To John and I, though, this was the epitome of the character: a walking, talking, thinking extension of the very substance of the bog. Dare I again evoke Theodore Sturgeon's description of "...the thing, the mold with a mind...?"

When Alan Moore took over the writing reins on the book from the wearied hands of Marty Pasko, we included this illustration in the first massive package of art and sketches and plot ideas. Alan loved it, and it was he who finally convinced Len to let us pull out all the stops. In the context of Swamp Thing's "rebirth" in SOTST #21, we introduced our version of the primal plant-elemental, the archetypical creature of the bayous unleashed anew, the Swamp Thing restored. From Alan Moore's script for SOTST #21:

"...we can see the massive figure of the Swamp Thing illuminated by the light from the open door. It is totally peeled and skinless and glistening... It looks like an anatomical specimen, only one that's made entirely out of bright green shoots and stems. Within the dark and interwoven green sockets, two hard scarlet pool balls stare down... with an awful lidless intensity. It still looks like Swamp Thing, but the color and the texture make the whole thing look startingly different...

CAPTION: I wonder what it will LOOK like, so new and raw and green?"

Totleben's vision of Swamp Thing before he began working on the magazine. ©1984 DC

The Swamp Thing we lovingly rendered in SOTST #21, and, later, in #23, makes John's "radical" illustration of the character seem tame in comparison. There are more surprises in store as Swamp Thing's acceptance of his true vegetable nature has its consequences. His color and physiology changes with the seasons, a detail that unfortunately misfired a bit when the ably-done 'fill-in' SOTST #28, drawn by Shawn McManus, failed (through no fault of Shawn's) to realise his autumnal peak colors as Alan, John and I had conceived it. By #30, we had already plunged him into his drab winter state, and the opportunity had passed us by. Well, maybe *next* fall....

But I am getting ahead of myself.

It began, for John and I, with *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing #16*. Oddly enough, I held that issue in my hands just a week or so before I cradled my newborn baby daughter in my arms for the first time. In every way, it was a time for new beginnings.

Believe you me, life hasn't been the same since.

NEXT: Part 3 of "The Swamp Thing Papers: Here Be Monsters..." Designing new friends, revamping old friends and a look at the Unseen Unmen (and Unwomen!).

Continued from page 7

slick look that when Jack Kirby drew several issues of *Jimmy Olsen* in the early Seventies, all of the appearances of Superman were redrawn by Curt Swan.

Curt Swan joined D.C.'s staff in 1945, drawing a Boy Commandoes story as his try-out assignment. He did so well that he remained with the strip for three or four more years. He then drew a few Superboy stories but his first Superman story didn't come until 1955 when he worked on the Superman 3-D comic (which was reprinted in 1966). Thereafter he occasionally drew Superman stories doing more and more as the Sixties progressed.

In the Forties Superman underwent all of the real changes that the character would ever go through. His chest emblem's shape was established by around issue #9 of *Superman* magazine. His leaping became flying when the Fleischer animation studio ex-

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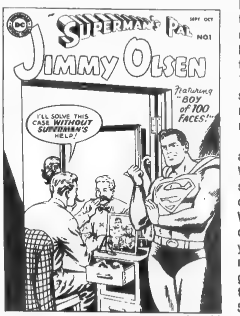
plained that leaping did not look right on the screen and that they'd have to change the character so that his flight ability was more graceful. Interestingly, most of the character changes came from outside sources like this. Jimmy Olsen was introduced on the radio show so that Superman would have someone to talk to and thus advance the story. Jimmy was introduced in the comic books in *Superman #13*. Supposedly the



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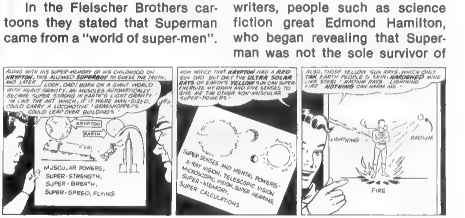
radio show also introduced green kryptonite so that Superman would have a weakness as he was quickly becoming more super the more popular he became.

But while Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster made Superman an alien from another world because of their intense interest in science fiction, it took another man to nail that down and explain just why coming from another world meant that Superman was unique on Earth.

In the Fleischer Brothers cartoons they stated that Superman came from a "world of super-men".


ALONG WITH HIS SUPER-HEARING OR HIS CHILDHOOD ON KRYPTON, HIS ALLEGED SUPERBODY TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND HUMANS, WRITERS WOULD ALSO WORK WITH NEVER BEFORE SEEN POWERS. ALTHOUGH VIRTUALLY RACHEL SUPER STRONG IN EARTH'S LIGHT GRAVITY, HE WAS THE JET WHICH, IF IT WERE NON-SOLID, COULD CARRY A LOCOMOTIVE THROUGHOUT A TUNNEL, COULD LEAP OVER BUILDINGS
SUPER-VISION
SUPER-BREATH
MUSCULAR POWERS, SUPER-STRENGTH, SUPER-BREATH, SUPER-SPEED, FLYING
NOW NOTICE THAT KRYPTONIAN HAS A RED SUN AND BUT ONE'S THE ULTRA SOLAR RAYS, ONE'S YELLOW AND GIVES SUPERMEN SUPER-POWERS. HE BASKS AND FIRE SURGES TO GIVE ME THE OTHER NON-MISCIOUS AS
SUPER-VISION, SUPER-HEARING, SUPER-BREATH, SUPER-CALCULATIONS
ALSO, THOSE YELLOW SUN RAYS, WHICH ONLY THAN EARTH POSSESS, WITH RADIOACTIVE WAVE LIKE X-RAYS, THROUGH WHICH NOTHING CAN HARM HIM
LIGHTNING
RADIUM
FIRE

©1984 DC

But if that was the case, why didn't the others escape from Krypton using their super powers? It was Mort Weisinger, former editor of the science fiction pulp magazine *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, who answered the questions that he knew readers must be asking about what makes Superman super.

"So he came from another planet and there's a difference in gravity? Why should he be able to fly? Why should he have X-Ray vision? It's contrary to science and reason," Weisinger stated. "I originated the concept that in a world circling a yellow sun his powers are multiplied, and that yellow sun gave him these abilities. These are the things the originators of Superman didn't figure out; they gave us this fabulous character without explaining why all his fabulous attributes existed."

It was Mort Weisinger and his writers who introduced such now familiar features as The Phantom Zone, where criminals were exiled on Krypton since the society did not believe in capital punishment. He also introduced the bottled city of Kandor which had been shrunken down by the super criminal Brainiac before Krypton exploded. It was Weisinger and his writers, people such as science fiction great Edmond Hamilton, who began revealing that Superman was not the sole survivor of

SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION OF SUPERMAN'S AMAZING STRENGTH--!
SUPERMAN CAME TO EARTH FROM THE PLANET KRYPTON, WHOSE INHABITANTS HAD EVOLVED AFTER MILLIONS OF YEARS TO PHYSICAL PERFECTION.
BECAUSE OF THE SMALLER SIZE OF OUR PLANET WITH ITS CONSEQUENTLY WEAKER GRAVITY PULL, ASSISTED BY SUPERMAN'S TREMENDOUS MUSCLES IN THE SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENT OF EARTH, HE PERFORMS FEATS OF GREAT STRENGTH
THE GRASSHOPPER LEAPS WHAT TO MAN IS THE DISTANCE OF SEVERAL CITY BLOCKS!
IT IS NOT TOO FAR FETCHED TO PREDICT A TIME WHEN OUR VERY OWN PLANET MAY BE INHABITED BY SUPERMEN!

At last Superman's origins are explained. © DC Comics

Krypton. Besides the Phantom Zone criminals who would periodically escape to wreck havoc, *Action #252* introduced Superman's cousin, who would come to be known as Supergirl.

It was explained that an asteroid-sized chunk of Krypton was hurled into space by the explosion. The people were able to survive by putting down thick lead shielding against the Kryptonite rays emitted by the piece of their world which had now developed radioactive properties deadly to them. For years this worked. Superman's cousin was born and grew to adolescence, but then a meteor shower destroyed the lead shielding and the girl's parents put her in a small rocket and propelled her towards the Earth. There she was found by Superman. For no particularly good reason other than to have things handled differently, Superman asked his cousin to keep her existence a secret. So she lived at an orphanage and performed super-missions secretly until she was officially revealed to the world in *Action #285*, nearly three years later.

It was under Weisinger that the "Imaginary story" was introduced, which is D.C.'s version of what Marvel does in *What If?*. The only difference is that Marvel says that theirs is an *alternate reality* while D.C. labels theirs as outright imaginary tales. No real difference at all.

The most famous of all the Superman imaginary stories is "The Death Of Superman" in *Superman #149* (November, 1961) in which Lex Luthor finds a cure for cancer, pretends to go straight and then traps Superman once and for all, killing him with a kryptonite ray. This occurred during the period that Supergirl was still working as Superman's "secret weapon". In this story she makes

her dramatic appearance to the world by capturing Luthor and taking him to Kandor where he is sentenced to the Phantom Zone.

Some fans prefer "The Amazing Story of Superman Red and

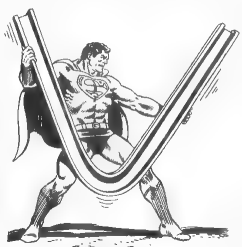
Superman Blue" in *Superman #162*, but this is more of a wish-fulfillment story. Superman is divided into two Supermen, one with a predominantly red costume and the other with a predominantly blue one. They proceed to marry the women of their choice (one marries Lana Lang, the other Lois Lane) and solve all of the ills of the world, including putting an anti-evil ray into orbit so that all criminals reform. As dark as "The Death Of Superman" is, that's how light is "The Amazing Story Of Superman Red and Superman Blue".

But probably the all-time favorite Superman legend is "Superman's Return to Krypton" in *Superman #141* which features some of Wayne Boring's finest art in the series. What's more surprising is that it is *not* an imaginary story! While attempting to pursue a strange alien creature, Superman flies too fast and crashes through the time barrier into the past where he finds himself within sight of Krypton and its red sun. Knowing that he'll lose his powers he quickly lands on the planet. While there he falls in love with an actress he meets while working as an extra on a movie, and even meets his parents—at their wedding. Another quirk enables him to escape Krypton's fate but the ending is rather pat compared to the rest of the story.

Inexplicably, Wayne Boring was fired by Weisinger in 1966. After doing a little work for Marvel comics he went into commercial art and today works as a security guard—but he may yet do a new Superman story or two.

Another Weisinger innovation was red kryptonite, a form which was not deadly but which could have peculiar effects on any former Kryptonian. Its changes varied from splitting them into two people, temporarily stealing their powers, giving them amnesia, making them fat, tiny or insane. The effects are temporary and the same piece of red K cannot affect the same person twice.

In the early Seventies, all of the kryptonite on Earth was neutralized so that writers had to seek elsewhere for possibilities. Superman was updated by having him become a TV journalist instead of a newspaper reporter. But other than continuing subplots (such as Vandal Savage coming from Earth II to our world where he's a legitimate businessman despite what Superman knows of his nefarious activities on our parallel world), the stories are fairly average. The only really exciting things in the book lately have been some stories by Marv Wolfman illustrated by Gil Kane for *Action Comics*. Kane brings a pleasant early Sixties look to the strip and Wolfman's stories have tended to be inventive the way the best of the old Superman stories were.



Oddly enough, the best Superman story done in years was not in the comics but in the first Superman motion picture, directed by Richard Donner. There was clearly a lot of respect for the material and the introduction, showing a boy reading an old Superman story which fades into the globe on the Daily Planet building, got everything off to a glorious start. Richard Donner infused the first film with a heart that was all but missing in the second and stabbed through and through in the third. The third film is notable only because the artificial kryptonite is apparently red K as its effects, although more prolonged, are quite similar.

After the first Superman film came out in 1978, people started wondering why the comic book isn't written with as much force and dynamism. The first film *seemed* real whereas the comic book reads like a comic book, even on its best days.

In *The History Of Comics*, Jim Steranko best recognized the position that Superman was in, then and now, when he said, "If he has weakened, we must remember that like the legendary Atlas, Superman bears the weight of the comic world upon his shoulders. If he has been momentarily eclipsed by the scintilla of stylistic trends, we must understand his position is one of stability, not of change. And if he has grown weary we must embrace him for the ten thousand and one battles he has fought, outselling all his imitators put together, for his is a timeless triumph and from his life stream all hero strips flow.

"He is a superman among supermen."

SPOTLIGHT

WEIRD WORLD'S MIKE PLOOG CREATES BLACK CAULDRON

Mike Ploog has long been active in the comics industry. His sketching skills have also been utilized by the film industry. Ploog helped create the wonderful creations seen in **The Dark Crystal**. Now Disney Studios are utilizing that talent in **The Black Cauldron.** Here are the designs of the Horned King's henchmen for **The Black Cauldron.** © Walt Disney Productions.

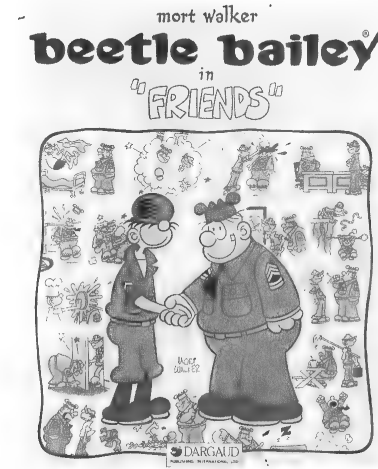
Publishers Picks

I told them not to make me write Publisher's Picks this issue. Perhaps it's just a passing fit of depression or a momentary lapse of interest, but I really had to strain to find anything worthwhile. Unfortunately, they explained to me that no one but the publisher could really write a column called Publisher's Picks. And besides the readers are already used to my crankiness.

Perhaps the only glimmer of light on the current scene seems to be lit by the smaller independent companies at the moment. And do remember that I say this while not being as enamored by the break from the big companies as many others. Up until now I have continued to find that the best stuff was still coming from Marvel and DC. But for whatever reason, this time had real difficulty finding more than a couple of books worth pointing out that the majors had released. The best work this month is in the bush league publishers.

Of course, it is hard to call a couple of the publications in question bush leaguers. Dargaud is one of the largest publishers of graphic material in the world, far outsizing domestic giant Marvel. Among their hits they number both Asterix and Lucky Luke. As well as previously recommended Kelly Green by Leonard Starr and Stan Drake. Now they have joined forces with the greatest creator of comic strips on the current American scene—Mort Walker. Beetle Bailey has now become the latest character to be offered in graphic novels. And these are true graphic novels, not merely collections of small bits. The writing and art are what you expect, that is to say excellent. The package is the usual Dargaud high quality and the color is quite lush. Don't miss "Friends" or "Too Many Sergeants".

Myth Adventures also starts out life with all of the advantages. It is published by the mini-conglomerate built on elves, by Richard and Wendy Pini, WARP Graphics. On the heels of their hit **Elfquest** they offer a new fantasy, this one based on the fine series of novels by Robert Asprin. Asprin is the man who brought us Thieves World, in books and games and anything else they could shove into print. Now Asprin has turned **Myth Adventures** into a comic book and a good one, with illustrations by the same man who rendered the Starblaze Editions of the original books. Phil Foglio, after death-abornin' of his own **D'Arc Tangent**, crafts this one with real style.

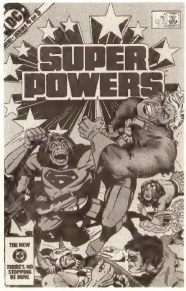


Six From Sirius also offers a fine story with excellent characters. You will really learn to care about the people in this one—even if they do not belong to the human race. Those among us who remember the glory days of **Master of Kung Fu**, when it was under the hands of Paul Gulacy and

Doug Moench will need no further prompting. Others should need only be told that this is true science fiction, with serious concepts and careful crafting of characterization. It involves intrigue, interstellar warfare but so far no evil emperors, thank God.

Fantagraphics Books has finally crafted one that I like. Following up the depressing **Survivors**, the punk silly **Love and Rockets** and the too-irregular **Hugo**, they finally have a winner. At least the first issue would seem to indicate that this is a book worth waiting for. Knowing the record of both the publisher and smaller presses in general, one can only hope that we do not have to wait too long. **Dalgoda** is a dog. Although from another world and with wisdom beyond that of man, he is still a dog. And don't all dogs really possess those qualities anyway? I won't go into specific details but needless to say you will learn to care more about this dog than about almost any character you will read this year. He is indeed more human than most any other protagonist now appearing in comic books—or comic strips for that matter. The artwork of Dennis Fujitake is different, obviously slavishly devoted to European influences, but able to hold its own. And the story by Jan Strnad is worth the effort. Strnad is the man who destroyed DC's Atom and most of his other work, usually in combination with Richard Corben, leaves me completely cold. But this one is different.

On to DC and Marvel. This time I will only say that if you have continued to read **Super Powers** you have been



rewarded, and if you have not you have missed a good one—Not a great one, but a good one. And the last issue in that series will be solely crafted by Jack Kirby. At least don't miss that.

Marvel has two worth seeking out. **Power Pack** is written by Robert Heinlein—I'm sorry, correct that, Louise Jones cum Simonson. And it is very, very good. The protagonists are kids but don't let that stop you from enjoying one of the best stories you will read in comics. The book is no more slanted down than the juveniles of Heinlein, or Norton, or Lewis, or Baum, or Carroll. Louise has joined the club.

Last is the much-revived Sub-Mariner This book has been incarnated and cancelled so many times that I have lost count. This time the demise is built-in. It is planned as a four issue miniseries. But, for at least four issues it will be worth following.

Once upon a time...

Bill Sienkiewicz ★ Doug Moench ★ Mark Evanier ★ Mike Sekowsky ★ Don Heck ★ Tom Sutton ★ Jim Starlin ★ Pat Boyette ★ John Warner ★ Tom Orzechowski ★ Deborah Moench ★ Susan Fox ★

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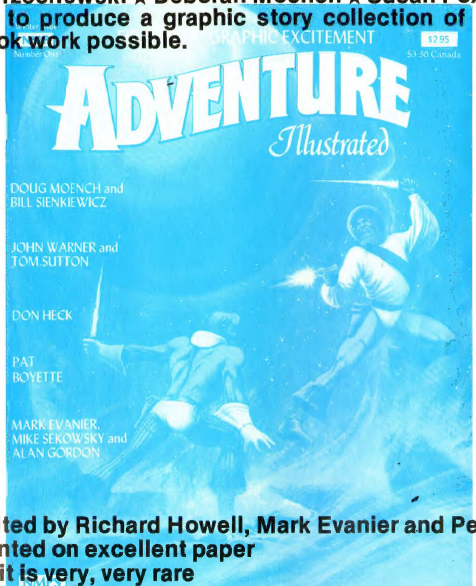

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